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SUNDAYS  
IN  
WELLINGTON COLLEGE.



# BOY-LIFE

*ITS TRIAL. ITS STRENGTH. ITS FULNESS.*

SUNDAYS IN WELLINGTON COLLEGE

1859—1873

THREE BOOKS.

BY

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*ἔγραψα ὑμῖν νεανίσκοι  
· ὅτι ἰσχυροὶ ἐστέ.*

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## BOOK I.



## SERMON I.

### SCÖRN OF CONSEQUENCE.

DANIEL iii. 17.

*“He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king, but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve Thy gods.”*

THE Book of Daniel is, even historically considered, one of the most striking in the Bible. The narrative portion of it is the contemporary work of the Chief Minister of the strongest period of the great dynasty which reigned, as it seems to us, almost at the beginning of the world's history. Events in that kingdom, and events in that court are related by one who stood there, and who, whether as sufferer or as guiding spirit, bore a great part in them, or rather *was* a great part of them. Law, as we understand law, had scarcely begun to be. Law was the expression of one man's will ; a man of genius, doubtless, of discernment, of general aims for the good of the subject, and the inheritor of useful traditions of government. This is the least that can be said of the King of Babylon. But the corrupting influence of absolute power had done wild work in his heart as a man. The frenzy of thwarted determination is succeeded by the frenzy of despairing repentance after crime, in a way that has been seen in some other absolute princes ; and yet in stronger colours corresponding with the intensity of his absoluteness and of his Eastern character.

Acts like his have been done in fragmentary ways again and again. Tyranny has had its victims over and over again—has made for itself victims by monstrous, by

impossible edicts. And tyrants of later times, with greater light, have sinned far more against conscience and against God and their people, even though the scale of his operation was far greater than theirs. It is possible that very petty tyranny—the tyranny of one person over another—may show a worse heart, may deserve a worse punishment, may draw down upon itself a severer heart-breaking than even wide-spread cruelties, which were only a consequence of wrong views of what was right. All this of course we know. We know that one of our own hearts may be more alienated from the truth and the light—may be in a more painful and diseased condition, than the heart of some man in history whose acts astonish us. It is very easy to condemn cruelty on a large scale when we read of it, but it is equally easy to see that miserable persecutions of the weak by the strong, the contempt of unhappiness, the neglect to do kindnesses on a small scale, may be the outcoming of a very narrow, poor, and evil heart, which needs a great deal of awaking, a great deal of daily care and watchfulness before we can remove it from the condemnation and degradation which waits to receive all offenders against humanity and the law of brotherly kindness.

But let us return to mark the acts of the monarch of Babylon. It is the history of a man whose mind and will represents for a whole nation all that we understand by Law, Constitution, Jurisprudence. The government was in that condition out of which all these things had to grow. One family—one man, had, by their ascendancy, their power of leadership, gathered to themselves all power of government, and attracted to themselves all military means of enforcement.

And thus we see the strange sight of a man unable to conceive anything beyond his power to order; any persons or any affairs with which he had not the will and the right to interfere. A nation is moved entirely from one part of the empire to another—a whole religious system is interdicted; a new religious system, with new objects of worship and new rites, is the creation of a day; private devotions—

the prayers of the mid-day retirement—are prescribed or forbidden. The interior of the house is as the public street—nay, the inner thoughts of the heart, the workings of the spirit, are not considered to be rightfully withdrawn from inspection. This form of the lust of controlling power is not confined to one form of government. Aristocratical governments have tried to exercise it. Democratical governments have tried to exercise it with some success. But we feel its monstrosity most when we see it practised by one man.

Next the revolting punishments which enforced this absolutism arrest our attention—death by fire in the king's presence; death by wild beasts apparently reserved for the purpose; the massacre of families; the destruction of buildings. It was only by such extravagance of vengeance that such unhallowed power, such self-destructive arbitraments could be maintained; maintained, for these things are not savage outbreaks; we observe the kingdom in its usual orbit.

The pretensions and the power are gigantic; Nebuchadnezzar could so act and did so govern, because he was King of Babylon, as it were, a human god, out of whose hands, as he and his predecessors had declared, no god could deliver any one.

Yet even in those days this king had ever in his presence persons who admitted no such pretensions of his. He even relied on the fidelity of men who went about with another law than his in their hearts; who never hesitated to say to him, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

Their presence in his court marked a step and a change in the history of the Old World. There had been no such persons near his predecessors. It was one of his own most violent acts which had placed such thinkers and such religious men upon the steps of his throne. Their service was constant and devoted. But the moment he passed a certain line of the existence of which he had never before dreamed, there he found resistance, remonstrance, disobedience. They were the first persons who spoke out in the presence of those terrible Asiatic monarchies that conscience was a

rule for itself; that there was a personal God whom no commanded alterations in religion could displace—a living God who held the person of the Babylonian prince no dearer than the person of the poorest servant; who had given all men their work to do—all men their inner light to see by; who hated perversions of right; who owned no such thing as irresponsible power; who allowed no soul to make that power an excuse for its evil deeds; who abhorred both the tyranny which commanded, and the cowardice which obeyed in any evil work.

Thus these men stood erect in the midst of a prostrate race. They could not be controlled in any matter which was beyond the line we spoke of. Death, and torture, and dishonour; bribes, decorations, riches—none of these things could be attended to where religion was in question. In all else faithful servants, faithful counsellors, they neither thought of retiring so as to shun persecution, nor of bowing the head till it passed over. They held their places, and they met the storm.

They will not cease to pray to their own God. They will not adore even outwardly the king's god. They will not taste the forbidden meat.

Now all the forms of that life are passed away; but the life itself, and those who live it, are the same life and the same human beings as ever. We are not desired to commit public idolatry; and the distinctions of ceremonial life are gone. But conscience has temptations not less subtle. There is cruelty of different kinds still. There are alluring temptations still. We do not see our tyrants in such gigantic forms, and it is easier to shun, easier to escape, and easier too to conform, without being marked persons. But still there are gifts, still there are keen pleasures, still there are ready enjoyments offered as the prize of disobedience. Still there are principles, there are even persons to say, If you worship this way, or if you are so plainly determined to obey a different law from ours, if in your patience, your diligence, your devoutness, your conscientiousness, you reproach our sloth, indulgence, profanity, or indifference, we will make you uncomfortable or

we will make you ridiculous. And souls are given away in order to win what principles like these can give, and to avoid the pain which principles like these can inflict.

Now let us take three points in the history of the three young men whom we read of this morning in the first lesson.

I. Their resolution. II. Their endurance. III. Their deliverance.

I. Their resolution. The first thing to mark is this—that they were entirely in the dark as to whether God would really come down as it were and interfere to save them from suffering, or not, yet that this made no difference in their resolution. They said, “God will deliver us; *but if not*—supposing He does *not* deliver us—we will not serve thy gods for all that.”

Possibly God would. They were disposed to think He would *even in this way* fulfil His promise to help those who trust in Him, and so possibly He would *visibly* deliver. On the other hand, it might not be His will to do so at all. He might be intending to leave them to suffer in the flesh, and His deliverance might not be shown on the *earth* at all—it might be reserved till the time after death, when they would in the glory of a new life feel that death itself had been their deliverance.

But if so, and it should please God that they died in the very fire, it was to their minds certain that it was much better to cast in their lot with righteousness—to take the suffering that God willed and bear it, rather than to enjoy life and wealth, splendid dresses, equipages, palaces, attendance, as the wages of sin.

On the one side right, on the other enjoyment. Right shadowed with pain, enjoyment coloured with sin.

Their answer was free and decisive, and we all glory in it this day. And perhaps we ought not to leave out of sight something which makes this answer more remarkable still. Many a martyr has, in the words of a great martyr of old, stood firm because the eye of faith enabled him to see clearly what was behind a flashing sword. He said, “Who



would not labour to reach that brightness, to become the friend of God and enter in a moment the joy of Christ? If earthly soldiers are glorious when after victory over the foe they return to their own land in triumph, how much greater the glory of returning after victory over Satan to that paradise from whence our father fell—to overthrow him who overthrew us and bear his trophies back—to take our stand beside Christ, to become an heir with Him, to be made equal to the Angels, with Patriarchs, Apostles, Prophets, to enter exultingly on the possession of a heavenly realm. What persecution can outweigh those thoughts, what torture defeat their power?" So many a martyr since.

But we must remember that these Jews could not speak such a language, for these latter truths had not yet been revealed. If there was a deep conviction of the Life to come, it was still a dim one; and at any rate they said nothing of the kind to Nebuchadnezzar. They neither revealed any such hope, nor sustained themselves by it. All they said was that they had cast in their lot with their own God and the cause of God; and should that cause be bound up with utmost sacrifice of self, they would die in pain if need were. They would hold themselves still in the Lord, they would trust in Him, they would take whatever came from His hand: they would avert their eyes from all else, all temptations, all consequences. They were determined to know Him, they would remember this one thing—never to deny Him. In Him they believed, in Him they would still be found. Thus was the answer made, frank and free, "Our God is able to deliver us, and He will deliver us. *But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods."

There was no compromise—no affecting an outward reverence for the idol, yet trying to keep the thoughts firm, as some weak ones try to do,—no bowing like the Syrian general in the house of Rimmon, praying meanwhile to Jehovah to excuse him—no offering incense as some poor Christians did to the Roman gods in times of persecution, pretending in heart to offer it to their own God.

Theirs was the spirit in which Job said, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him;" and theirs the spirit in which to-day some one of us may say, "Whatever happens I will do as my father desired me. I will obey my conscience, and my Bible, and my Saviour."

"We will not serve thy gods." If life is falsehood, let me not live. If the truth is death, then let me die. Somewhere in God's world, some day in God's time, the great contradiction will be washed out. In that place, in that time, may I be found to have held to the truth through darkness, and contradiction, and terror.

II. Their endurance. The prince of this world could not bear such language. The mysterious strength they had was not within his range; he could not believe in it. The form of his visage was changed. He did not look like the same man, usually so calm and strong, as he ordered the common hideous death to be intensified that they might pass away as a breath, that they might not slowly perish, that they might one moment be seen as living men, and the next that there should be no relic of them.

But it was not death that is the most dreadful, especially such swift death: expectation is worse; and the standing alone is worse; to be utterly unsympathized with, unexcused, to have your obedience to duty ascribed to malicious, perverted hearts, to be hated with all hatred, and despised with sovereign contempt, and looked on as the worst of foolish ones. The last looks, the thought of the pulse beating our own last hour, have brought many to recantation. To them all seemed as if the second alternative was coming, and that He would not deliver. As the flames leap out, as they are hurried forward by the mightiest men that are in his army, as the fierce heat is too much even for the executioners, they are, as it were, hurled forward with such a force, that there is no halting, and they fall bound as into some burning crater.

III. And all is over, and they are safe. In a moment no more three men bound weltering in flames; four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth as of a son of God. Like the sons of men but not

of them, loftier, more glorious, his raiment shining with the victory that makes the fire to be of no force on them, "like a moist whistling wind." Nebuchadnezzar says himself it is no mortal companion that is with them.

How nobly and how beautifully was it imagined that the praises they then sang to Him were such as tradition tells us;—that men wrapped and bathed in the most powerful natural force, finding it powerless upon them, called on all the creatures of God by them to "bless the Lord, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever."

They had trusted the Lord of visible things, and all His creatures have their powers only for good, and to work together for them that fear the Lord, and nothing can avail against such as stand in the strength of Him who made them.

We have already in our progress dwelt enough perhaps on the special lessons this story has for us. False gods are yet in the world in every place, and have their worshippers strong with brute force and unscrupulous. Who can put them down? They are to be driven away by the weapons of the dauntless three. Strength and patience, and steady resistance on the part of those who know and have the truth will not only win the cause, but may win the very hearts that would otherwise have served them, and been tyrannical in their cause. Walk thus resolved, and He who was with the three will be with you, and you will know Him for the Son of God.

## SERMON II.

### BOYISH RESOLVE.

1 SAM. iii. 20.

*"And all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord."*

WE sometimes hear used in a kindly, yet somewhat disparaging sense, the words Boyish Resolve. They may be used to mean an impetuous fancy, over-confident in itself, and worn out in a few months, or forsaken in a changed scene. They seem to mean something fresh and fair, bright with innocence and honour, but not made to endure—a dewy morning freshness—an early vanishing bloom.

But, beloved, a resolve is a resolve, whether it be made by boy or man; and that it is "boyish" does imply that it is generous and unselfish. Sad then that the common use of the term should tell us that many generous and unselfish boys grow up, forgetting their first good desires, and failing to bring them to good effect. Thus alone is it possible for the word "boyish" in this phrase to have gained a secondary idea of "transitory."

And so the fault lies not with our boyhood, but with our manhood. But be you sure, that, more or less latent though they be, many—aye, very many—of the resolves which have made men great and good, and given them a place in the history of man and a crown in the presence of God, have been boyish resolves.

An Italy once, an India twice, has succumbed to a boyish resolve. In the higher sphere, that of conquest in the

intellectual world it is mere matter of necessity, that to be a great poet, or a great scholar, or a great orator, or the conqueror not of bodies but minds, must have been the boy's resolve before it was the man's reward: careers like those must be chosen by the open eyes of boyhood, must be pursued with all its vivid forces. Again, in the higher spiritual world how young have been most of our chieftains—the saints of heaven—at the time when their choice was made and proclaimed. It has been often noticed how young the great leaders of European Christendom have ever been.

And with these facts—these sights before him—who shall speak or think lightly of boyish resolve? How young were those great heroes of the Bible, whose story has been our morning reading this late summer time—Daniel, Samuel, David.

It is the boyish resolve of one of these to which I wish to ask a few moments of thought this morning. "All Israel knew that Samuel was *established*"—in the margin we read *faithful*—to be a prophet of the Lord—not *established*, that is, in the sense of *appointed*, but in the sense of *faithful*. Firmly *resolved*, as in the verse of the Psalm, "His heart is established and will not shrink."

His mother had early dedicated him to the Lord; and he, when of fit age (just as we take our promise home to ourselves at confirmation, if not earlier), took his mother's promise made for him upon himself. He was faithful—firmly resolved in himself—to be a prophet of the Lord.

This is the first point—it was a resolution, and a young resolution.

The second point is *what* he resolved to do, and at what time. To be a prophet of the Lord, seems to imply such grace from heaven, such free-will on the part of God,—God everything, man nothing. And perhaps we may be liable to forget that the man may be prepared, and fitted for his work, or otherwise; and that by the line which he has himself taken.

Samuel gave himself up to be what God would have him

to be ; to be that in the best way, and in the most perfect degree.

In Samuel's time the priesthood and the institutions of the Tabernacle were regarded with little love or honour ; an ancient vague respect, not unmingled with fear, attended on them ; but as we might express it in terms suited to our own day, "The Church was not popular." Far from it ; we read that "men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

The institution of the Church of Israel was rich with all glorious and miraculous memories—memories of the Desert, and of Sinai, and of the Conquest of Canaan ; but, as men saw it in their own day according to the dreadful picture drawn in the first four chapters of the Books of Samuel, it had become a snare and a reproach. The holy ark was served by the unholy hands ; the high-priest, the spiritual centre of the land, was the weakest of men ; the sanctuary and her festivals were become only a means of extortion in the hands of unprincipled ministers. They were the destruction of the peace and purity of families—the ruin of all that they were born and sworn to uphold or glorify.

This was a rude trial of the faith of the chosen people :—

"Souls were wandering far and wide,  
And curses swarmed on every side."

And if ever even slighter faults than these have made a church unpopular in any country, the result is that many are offended and depart who would otherwise stand firm enough : the weak are lost ; the ignoble either fall away openly, or sneer at that to which they professedly adhere. But these are shadows of the griefs in Israel. There was no practical work whatever done to which the defenders could point happily and confidently. There was no principle which could hold men secure in their allegiance, save their vague mysterious dread of worse coming if they fell away, and so the effect of a corrupt priesthood was either to alienate men altogether, or else to degrade their religion into dark superstition.

There have been times since that, times in the history

of Israel, times in the history of the Christian Church itself, which have paralleled that terrible epoch. But no institution falls utterly but by its own fault, and in the darkest ages the Church of God has had enough of fire and light in her to rekindle the world. The prophet Samuel was the instrument in God's hand. The institution of Prophets which he revived, and which God so widely blessed, was the means by which he purified the priesthood and restored the Church. And for ever we may trust, that whether the evil be great or small which has arisen, whether the unpopularity be well deserved or no, whether it spring from a vicious source, or from mere languor, or from want of organization, or only from external pressure, God has ever the reviving means, and the instruments through which He will work.

It was a time, as we said, when the ignoble fell away. And that is the very time when the noble cling the faster. As the true daughter abides the firmer at her father's side, and loves him the more devotedly, and yields up more of her being to him when old age, and blindness, and poverty have come upon him, and "a dreadful sound is in his ears," so it is the trouble of a country and the trouble of a Church which brings out patriotism, and lets the world see what the life of ancient faith is, and what love, what hope, what confidence waits upon him whom God chooses for His work. Small and of no reputation might the boy in the Temple have seemed—there were other boys there who wore the ephod and served the priest and sung the service,—but this boy had established his heart—this boy was faithful to be a prophet of the Lord, and the eyes of all Israel were upon him.

If, in its lowest estate, the noble-hearted had loved the good cause better than when they could be accused of loving it because it brought honour and wealth, how fast would such love both mount and spread when they saw and knew that there was one arising who was not only full of ability, but full of faithfulness—full of establishedness—to be at once the representative man of themselves and the representative man of God.

And now what has this history to do with us this day?—just everything. The history is not the history of countries or of churches only. It is the history of the Cause of God; and there is no place, no society in which the Cause of God does not go through the self-same phases—even before your own eyes, if you will see it, there is a Church of God at work—maintained and counteracted; and when should boyish resolve more affect the Church of God than as it works in our society?

But there is no one, either here or elsewhere, who can say I will take the cause of God under my protection; I will do great things for it; I will espouse it and make people see how good it is.

You may try to do all this—but you must try with humility—you cannot carry it through with a high hand—you can only be willing to *serve* it, and to take the wages of that service whatever they are. It is impossible to do great things for that cause simply because you believe it to be good for mankind, whilst you, from what you fancy to be a superior point of view, hold it as only one of the elements of your own life. You must surrender yourself to the Cause of God, and make it wholly efficient within yourself, whatever vexations it causes you, whatever pleasant things it demands that you should resign—before you can get others to admire and submit to it.

What is the main reason of the failure—when it does fail—of God's cause in any place? Is it the genius, the wisdom, the self-disciplined strength of the forces that are arranged against it? On the contrary, you pity the weakness, you scorn the self-deceit, you loathe the self-indulgence of the enemies of the Cross of Christ. No, it is not the strength of the opposition; it is the inconsistency of the defenders of the Cause of God which makes it anywhere lose ground. Many enrol themselves openly in the army of God, take their oaths of allegiance to Him, receive His badge, and stand in His ranks. But what are they when they are not drawn up to battle; what are they among their tents and in other homes? Is their life, their fame, their language that of His men?



So you, if you feel even a real ardour for the cause of God, cannot allow yourself in inconsistencies far smaller than those named. The principle is the same. It is inconsistency on our part which weakens the cause of our Master in any place. And we must be watchful against *every* inconsistency. Thought as well as word must be subjected to review. We must be established—we must be faithful—to be servants of the Lord. It is boyish resolve which can alone (except under very strange circumstances) be or tend to be establishedness.

Now will you let me take one or two points—not as covering the whole ground, but as leading points in our way?

First, Prayer. No one, of course, can serve God without prayer, which is the means on our part of communication with Him; the means of obtaining that *strength* which is our chief want—more hurtful even than want of light or warmth, of knowledge and of feeling.

Well, is it not too true that many of you, looking back on a whole term, must confess to yourselves that your prayers have been hindered and shortened far more than you would say they ought to be; that haste in a morning and tiredness in an evening are allowed to hinder them very much? And now the holidays are beginning, and you will neither be obliged to be up so early in a morning, nor will you be so pressed at night. Yet will your prayers be now quite different things from what they have been? Will they be a little longer; will they be more thoughtful, more collected, less distracted; will you seek this strength divine in a better way? If so, good; but plainly, boyish resolve will be necessary to make this improvement. What has been the history of former holidays? Have your prayers been so much better than those in school-time hitherto? Or have you not found yourself tempted just as much by small things—though not by work or early hours—to shorten them? I fear that as a rule prayers in the holidays are not even quite as regular as prayers at school, simply because what you lack is method; the very regularity of this place tends to make you regular in your

own arrangements, and you are careless for want of method when outer regularity ceases. Now boyish resolve is wanted on your part to create for yourselves that *method*.

And a second point is Friendship. Any one who has any experience can see how many friendships are formed, not from any real attachment or respect, but simply from contact. Boys become friends to each other who have no real ties to each other. You "go with" such an one, not because you like him, to begin with, but because there is no one else at hand at the moment. And an intimacy springs up which you feel afterwards you cannot break. Now this has its good side: it teaches us to live happily with others, to appreciate varieties of characters; exclusive, critical, fastidious people fail to make warm friends, and so lose the crown of friendship: again, on the whole, if one loses a little the other gains, and the general tendency of school friendships is to good; I mean even of ordinary friendships, and not only of those glorious friendships which are the joy and pride of men's hearts; even ordinary friendships, I say, do good on the whole. But how much more would they do if there were a little Boyish Resolve, a little Establishedness, a little more faithfulness in holding each other and holding yourselves true to principles which you really respect, and rules which you do value, —if you "established" yourselves to be true friends to each other.

And now we cannot part without a few words to those who will not meet here any more. The end of term, the breaking up seems to me to be a thing which we never get used to. We never get to believe that the wounds will be quite healed. We know how much we shall miss many of you—how impossible it will be to replace you. It is difficult to feel, however we may know it, that the new combinations formed of new elements will still win their way.

The best legacy you can leave us is the memory of good examples; the speaking of earnest words, and above all the doing, when you leave us, of good deeds; the living of

earnest lives; the not becoming listless when the fear of school life is removed; the determination to be "established," to be faithful yourselves.

Forty faces so long familiar to disappear; forty unknown ones to come among us, to form first their impressions of us, and then to take for life their impress from us.

Careless some may be when they come to us, and careless will some few still be when they leave us; but the mark of the place will be upon them.

When they leave they may find themselves cast among those who will elevate them still more, or among those who, "having no mark of goodness to show," may be as unformed still in any high sense as you were when you first came as children among us.

Then still, in either case, you have the cause of God to maintain; it will need your faithfulness. Remember it will still have to win its way here, but it will have to win its way within you and around you too.

Pray for us, therefore, and we will pray for you. And as you look round on these buildings and these fields and trees and lines of distant horizon among which you have lived so long, ask what voice they have for you, what last word to say to you; what is the low murmur which still seems to speak to you out of the memories of the evil and the good which you have here known? It is low and simple, yet it is clear and thrilling, and it is Be Faithful.

## SERMON III.

### • ON THE STUDY OF STUDIES.

PROVERBS iv. 7.

*“Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom : and with all thy getting get understanding.”*

THE words of a father to his son. Solomon quotes them as an early recollection of David's teaching. “I was my father's son and he taught me thus.” They are indeed familiar sounds to our ears. Happy are we if they dwell in our hearts as they seem to have dwelt in the spirit of the young prince, making him keen and eager after all Knowledge, of books, of men, of society, of nature. A kind of key-note to his earlier life. Yet alas ! even he, the sage of sages, failed to take into his inner self the very spirit of the words, and because he was so unhappy as to confound Knowledge with Wisdom, and a keen inquisitive intellect with heaven-lighted judgment, even he fell. With all his getting he did not get exactly what his father meant when he had him get “understanding.”

In a place like this of ours, of which *study* is the end and object, and what we profess most certainly to recognize as the “principal thing,” it would be very good for us to be quite sure that we really ourselves should know why *study* is of such principal importance in life ; and that we should still more understand what that “understanding” is which is only to be gained, as a rule, by the help of study, and yet which even the most admirable students may possibly miss.

The want of understanding is no doubt the cause, hidden

even from themselves, why many do not make the advance in study which they would wish. The want of understanding is again the cause why many throw away opportunities of study. The want of understanding is that which causes it to appear to many a man's own self, and still more to lookers on, that study even of the best things has done him little or no good.

On the other hand, "understanding" may be the glorious fruit of study to many who have but little time or little natural aptitude,—but for those who have both one and the other, study with thought, study with clearness, study with energy, study long continued and persevering, leads on and up from stage to stage of understanding, perfectly clear from the gloom and the bitterness which hangs over Solomon's last disappointed words in the Book of Ecclesiastes; and makes them recognize all knowledge as the waving of the Robe of God, and all wisdom as a nearer access to Him through His Son, Who stands forth to reveal Him as He is, and makes human lives not ineffectual or lost even though they break off ever so early; but, whether with or without the name of him who so works for understanding, sends a voice of hope and encouragement down the wind for those who are below, for those who come after; and flashes a light into the dark, which shall be passed on from beacon to beacon, until the message of wisdom and of God shall have run everywhere; nor shall one of those who loved Him and even wished (however helplessly as it might seem to him) to help understanding to do its work in the world, shall be found to have failed or to be unloved and unblest.

But let us break up this subject a little, that we may get a practical hold on what we mean by Understanding, or Wisdom, as applied to the gaining of knowledge by study.

The first point is, that there must be Reality in our knowledge. It must be the real knowledge of real things.

The second point is, that there is no such thing as useless knowledge, and that the Knowledge of Theory is a greater thing than the knowledge of Practice; or to express it otherwise, the knowledge of Principles is beyond and greater

than and more important than the Doing of Things however well without understanding them.

The third thing is, that we must bring from somewhere else the knowledge of how to use knowledge; that our studies themselves are the furniture of a mind which has in itself, if we know how to find it and use it, a Power which does not come from the studies themselves, but from above them.

I. To return, the first point is, that we must make sure of the reality of our knowledge. It must be real knowledge; we must be sure that we, in the first instance, take it in as accurately as possible. We must not bridge over to ourselves difficulties whether little or great, or take a leap over them, leaving a part behind us that is not sound or solid. To do this is to teach ourselves to make mistakes. To do this is to teach ourselves not to love truth. To do this is to present ourselves to the world as pretenders professing to know what we are conscious of not knowing. Difficulties are the very things which, by being grappled with and overcome, make our minds powerful and active. I do not mean of course difficulties which are quite beyond us; we cannot hurt our powers much more than by throwing ourselves into the difficult parts of any subject before we have mastered the easy parts. But I mean that, in making our progress through those elements which can be taught and must be learnt first, *that* is the mind that will come by and by to be powerful and influential, which will not glide over a difficulty, or if it has to leave it on one side for a short time will not forget it, but return again and again until it is cleared up.

Then again the Knowledge to be real must be of Real Things. It must be the facts of history, the truths of revelation; it must be the facts of language, and those combinations of it to express thought which have expressed it most clearly, most effectively, or most affectingly; it must be the solid truths of science which can be proved, the great laws of space and time and motion which can be combined and be compared with facts and have deductions drawn from them.

The wheels of the mind of any one who misses difficulties will run slower and slower as he proceeds, at last he will lose interest even in that which he entered on with utmost ardour, and this is *why* you see so many a study, so many a delight, so many a passion of boyhood, neglected in after life and flung by as if it were a broken toy, instead of an unveiled portion of God's great truth.

And again, he whose mind plays for a long time with self-built fancies and takes no pains to see whether they are real or no, whether what he fancies will bear the test of truth or no, whether what he likes will stand the sober judgment of life and conscience, this turns out to be the man who believes in his later years that there is no truth, no morality, nothing worth believing, nothing worth denying yourself for.

II. But secondly, there is no doubt that much of the world's work is done by those who do not know what they are doing ; and this is why so much of it is done badly, and so much has to be undone, and so much to be done again. Many say to themselves, if they do not say aloud, that they only care to know *how* to do this and that, which they will have to do, they do not care to know *why* they do it in one way rather than another, or even *why* they do it at all. A living is to be got, a profession to be followed, they only want to make money, they only want to know the regular way of procedure. I fear many would justify this way of talking. But it is certain that there is nothing which, for the man, tends to keep him so low and poor of mind, and for the work nothing which so retards the work of wisdom or of goodness. This is pure selfishness, this is pure worldliness, of the earth and earthy and doomed to perish with the earth. And there are too many of those whose minds are more powerful, who have the lead, who have the direction of many others, who do all in their power to keep understanding out of the reach of their subordinates, and to confine them to the narrowest possible range : who say, "What I want is, some one who will do just what I tell him ; I do not care what his understanding is : I do not care that he should think for himself." It is really the

work of the enemy which is conducted in this way. Every man born into the world ought to have open eyes and an open heart, a zeal to understand all that he has to do, as well as readiness in doing it. A few years ago it was almost a maxim that an army was all the better for being unintelligent; and if so bad a theory could be urged with effect in behalf of anything that had to do with men, it might seem almost that masses of men who had to move hither and thither at a word might do it equally well whether they were intelligent masses or not. But the theory has been well broken down by late events, even for that kind of subject. And if it will not apply there, it will certainly apply nowhere else. Early let me entreat you, who with time before you and with intelligence and interesting lives opening to you, are preparing yourselves for those lives,—to draw no distinction between what will be immediately profitable in the way of knowledge and what will not. Seek knowledge wherever it is to be found, and be sure everything that you can possibly know will shed a light on all else and make you to see your knowledge not as a series of miserable, isolated, unmeaning fragments, but as a part of the universal map of knowledge and wisdom which God is for ever unrolling before the eyes of His children. However real may be the knowledge that you gain of any number of details, it is only by understanding principles that you can hope to make any use of details which shall advance or strengthen any single good cause. "Expert men can execute," says Lord Bacon, "and perhaps judge of particulars one by one, but the general counsels and the great plans and the marshalling of affairs" (*i.e.* the conduct of anything on a great scale, or on an advancing method) "come but from those that are learned."

III. But thirdly, we said that the Power to use Knowledge must come from something outside the Knowledge itself. And here again I may well use the words of our great English Philosopher and great Chancellor: "Simple men admire studies; and wise men use them. For they teach not their own use; but *that* is a wisdom without them and above them, won by observation." The mind may be



stored with facts, and with true theories, and with many a wise observation ; but after all it is only by considering, reflecting, observing that we can turn what we have already acquired to good account for ourselves, or for others. It is the working of the mind upon itself which renders it quick *at remembering, ready at using, lively in applying, reserved and truthful so as not to misapply, powerful at concentrating its powers to solve the next apparent difficulty,—* and when we come to the practice of life, considerate and judicious and able to take broad views in dealing with others, and in bringing to bear the influences which every one ought to have, and every one ought to use.

Well may it be said in a still higher sense that such Wisdom is “above and beyond our studies.” For it is beyond all that wisdom which is from above, which the Father gives to them that ask Him.

Why should a Chapel for Prayer, daily prayer, united prayer, belong as an essential part to ours and other places of education ? is it not for this, that whereas the cultivation of the mind and heart, the reason and the feeling, is the work of such places, we know that none of these can be cultivated to good effect, except the Wisdom that is above and beyond all come down and dwell with us, and because that Heavenly Wisdom has promised so to come when invoked by united hearts and voices in the name of Him in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge ?

Let no one then ever say to himself, “What matters it whether I think or not of the use to which I shall put what I learn hereafter ?” Let no one say, “What matters it whether I work in a holy, God-remembering spirit, or in a careless, thoughtless, even wicked tone ? Do I not see one sort of work prosper as much as another ?” No, you do not. You do not see the whole, you do not see the end. It is impossible that you should even well attain your own poor aim by so working. But in truth you must remember, the effect of Work on Knowledge is at the utmost a very small thing when compared with its effect on your Capacity, and the effect on the Capacity is not produced at all with-

out the true tone of mind. But yet again, the effect on the Capacity is an infinitely small thing when it is compared with the effect on the whole Character. Knowledge at its best will vanish away. Even the world itself dwarfs it in the distance as ages go by. But the effect on Character of earnest, persevering, successful work is permanent. It has the seal of eternity.

A greater statesman than he whom I have quoted, one who was in his time to all Europe with its many kingdoms what Bacon was to England, the great yet holy politician, St. Bernard, has said in words which describe our own time as accurately as they could have described his, and which place the mark where it ought to be placed on all inferior ways of working, on all poor reasons for seeking knowledge:—

“Those there are, who desire to know only in order that they may know, and this bears the taint of curiosity.

“And those there are, who desire to know that they may be known, and theirs is the shame of vanity.

“And those there are, who desire to know that they may sell their knowledge, I mean for wealth or for honours, and that is a shameful trade.

“And those there are, who desire to know that they may be built up, and this is Wisdom.”

“That they may be built up.” That strength of conscience, of will, of love, may come to them. That they may be perfect instruments in His hand who uses all knowledge and wisdom for eternal ends. That they may be built up in the Lord.

And therefore let us ever “pray to the Truth, which is God, that what we know not He will step by step teach us; that what we know of truth He will keep us in it; that what we are mistaken in, as men must be, He will correct; that when we fail He will strengthen us, and from all things that are false and all knowledge that may be hurtful deliver us evermore.—Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Fulgentius.

## SERMON IV.

### USING THE EARTH.

GENESIS ix. 3.

*“Even as the green herb have I given you all things.”*

THESE are the words of the Charter which Noah and his children received when after their long imprisonment, their long drifting months over the watery grave of their whole land, they stepped upon the green grass with the Bow of Promise fronting them. Hill and dale and stream were once more as they had been; new-born from a cleansing baptism; and all these, said God, were freely theirs—as freely as the grass which they trod beneath their feet once more.

Yet the new scene, and the silence of all sounds of life, and the vast ark behind them, were a sufficient comment on the words of God—such an explanation as the grossest could not mistake.

“I have given you all things,” said the voice of God, but the heart of man replied, “And I must not misuse them any more.”

The terrors of the past, and the knowledge that life though long is always running itself out to a close, reminded them that all things were given them for a purpose. They knew they were not given to any man for ever, for every man must die and leave them. And they knew they were not given to man that he might spoil and ruin them, that he might undo what God had done.

That was what mankind had done before the flood with

the earth and the things that were in it,—and with such a fearful result:

They had had all things given them, but they treated them as if they were to have them for ever. They had had all things given them, and they had used them wantonly, basely, viciously, in waste and riot—sinking and lowering themselves and depraving heart and imagination and speech and all that was most beautiful and glorious, until, since *every gift of God was now turned into an evil and did man's spirits harm instead of good, God came and took away both men and gifts.*

What then the Scripture narrative of the peopling of the world implies; what the general conscience of us all teaches, what education, if it is good for any purposes beyond those of making it easier to obtain livelihood and position, must have in view, let us endeavour to put in a clear light.

What is the end and object with which the Creatures of God are given to us? It is that we may use them to forward the Ends of our own Being, which are: (1) to serve and praise God; (2) to save our souls in the day of account, although this latter is not an end which should be kept mainly before us, since it is sure to be our portion if we fulfil the first end.

So that our question to-day becomes this: *How* are we to use the creation of God so that it may help us towards our own supreme object? How may we in the use of the created things which are put in our power answer God's design in committing them to us? We can in three ways do so:—

(1.) We can study them. We can see God Himself through them. We can learn in a thousand ways and see in a thousand various lights the wisdom with which all God's works are done, the carefulness and the delight and the love with which all is perfected and all is blessed. Even with such poor limited powers as the ancients had this was possible. "The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world," says St. Paul to the Romans, "being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are

without excuse," he adds, who do not see that eternal omnipotence and divinity. And if morally that which the eye could unassisted see taught them such lessons,—taught them at once the vanity of idols, and the weakness of materialism,—what ought to be our thoughts who can trace onward and inward the same Worker to more stupendous heights and to more infinite minuteness, who can watch the bickering firestorms of the sun, who can mark the varying streams, instant by instant, of the diffusive magnetic flood, or the ebb and flow of life itself in its central springs in the brain and nerve of creatures to whom we ourselves might seem almost as God, but for our utter powerlessness to save or to create the life of the simplest germ?

Again, the study of God's creation includes the study of all that flows from it. The mind of man is His creation, and the relations of men to each other, and the speech of man. And never can we be beyond that widening ring whatever it may be that interests us. The student of philosophy, of language, of history, he too is in more difficult and grander regions still, if he is a conscientious student, observing the ways of God, and the results and issues of them, and he can scarcely help looking forward to what shall be the final issue of all, that veiled secret on which the solitary lamp of Christ's Resurrection alone sheds any light.

But the second of the ways in which the Creation of God is to help us to fulfil our destiny, is by our Use of it. We may use it for our necessity, we may use it for our advantage, we may use it even for our delight, and for the exercise of our faculties, whether of mind or body, so long as we use it well. We use it again if it be painful or grievous in its effects on us, we use it then by patient and quiet endurance.

Thirdly, we are to use it, and how important it is so to use it none can doubt, we are to use rightly that in it which is agreeable and delightful to us by abstaining from it in obedience to temperance, and to the rules of discipline.

God has given us desires both bodily and mental. They are innocent, they are right, they are to serve a good and a holy end. The appetite of hunger for instance, the desire of knowledge for instance, might be taken. But it is plain that there is a limit to both of these. There are some things which it is not right for us to know. There are times and modes in which it is right to obey the appetite of hunger, but it is very easy to be intemperate of food ; and if we desire to know things that are not to be known by us the desire of knowledge becomes a restless, base curiosity. The restraint then of our powers, and the abstinence from certain things according to the teaching of wisdom and virtue, are of importance in the ways of using God's creation.

Now of the three ways of using the creation, of which we speak—the study of it, the employment of it, and the refraining from it—we may say that the first is the most noble ; the second is the most common ; the third is the most necessary. Without the third (that is abstinence, temperance, self-restraint, and discipline), and unless we use it in some ways frequently, and in some ways constantly, we never shall be faithful and moderate in the second—that is, in the *use* of created things ; we never shall be of the least use about the *first*—that is the *study* of them.

Without temperance, abstinence, discipline, we cannot study either the works of God, or the works of men which are God's works too in another degree ; we can be but foolish and conceited pretenders fancying that we have the end without the means, fancying that we can be at the mountain peak without climbing, at the journey's fair end without travelling.

But as it is the moderate right *use* of God's creation which is the most *commonly* required we will speak of that more particularly to-day.

Now, if all that God has put within our reach is to be used for a certain end, we must use it just as much and just as little as it will serve that end, and neither more nor less.

If the abstaining from what God has put within our reach is good for a certain end, we must abstain from it just as much and just as little as will serve that end, and neither less nor more.

And this plainly cannot be done, my friends, if we have confused minds.

If we are not certain what the end is, we shall sometimes mix it up in our minds with the means to that end. To work for our living is a good and necessary aim. To acquire knowledge is one of the noblest things on earth. To master the minutest details, however trivial or irksome, of a profession, or of a piece of work, is essential to the thorough-minded, conscientious man. But even these (the greatest and most legitimate objects of man's diligence), even these can be pursued as if they were not means but ends. If the labouring man, or earnest student, says that his mind is so fully occupied that he can give next to none of it to God, and is conscious that the desire to serve God is not a predominant and prevailing spirit in his work, he is but like a man who reads a book intently as he draws near the edge of a precipice. He is like one who raises a mist over his own eyes, "blind, not knowing whither he goeth; he walketh in darkness, hath not the light of life."

The reason is, that to him the *means* of serving God have grown so all-important, that he forgets altogether that it was to serve God that he set out. And while an unconscious service of God is no doubt being carried on by every animal creature living its life, by every poor hound that hunts, and every bird that sings,—the prerogative of man is, that his service can be a conscious one; the duty of man is to keep his service ever before the light of his consciousness.

So then we are to use the world as not abusing it—to use the world with an eye to the reasons why we entered it, and, beloved, it must be confessed that so soon as we begin to apply the thought practically to our lives and test ourselves by that rule, there can be no doubt that we all of us find many foolish and untrue notions lording it

over us, great want of order, great want of simplicity, both in the things which we propose to ourselves to do, and in the way in which we set to work to carry out even the best things that we intend.

In short, the source of our error lies—the cause of our confusion, shortcomings, sins—in that we place the means before us, as if it were the end, and leave out the thought of the end in our lives and conversation.

When we go wrong in our work or our leisure, our words or our silence, our thoughts and our judgments, we do it because we forget the end of everything; because we dethrone from its rightful, its eternal seat, the strong, the bright, the radiant remembrance that we are of God, that we are in God, and that we are on our way to God.

This glorious, helpful truth we put away, and we take up another rule instead; but how weak a rule, oh how misleading, oh how unworthy to be named in the same breath with the other—we take up the new false rule of going by what we *like* and what we *dislike*.

As if we did not know that things which we *like* often hinder and hurt us. As if we did not know that the things we *dislike* often help us, and strengthen us, and forward us and do us good in every way.

To go by what we *like* and what we *dislike* is plainly a false rule and as plainly a contemptible one—not that we can help *liking* or *disliking*, but only that it does not *matter* whether we *like* or *dislike*, while it makes an overwhelming, an eternal difference whether or no we live by the other more simple and quite perfect rule, to use and to abstain from everything just as much and just as little as we see that so doing will help us forward in the true end of our existence, to serve God and to praise Him.



## SERMON V.

### FRESHNESS OF SPIRIT.

PSALM xxxvi. 9.

*"With Thee is the well of Life, and in Thy Light shall we see Light."*

THIS verse of one of our morning Psalms to-day is one of the numerous allusions which occur along the whole course of sacred literature to the types of the wilderness wandering of Israel.

There the water flowing from the pierced rock, there the pillar of fire leading and lighting, had taught the people in the most fresh and vivid way, that God is the Life and Light of those who believe in Him and follow Him. The water their Life amid barrenness, the fiery pillar their Light in darkness.

"With Thee is the well of life, and in Thy light shall we see light."

The frequent occurrence of these two images in conjunction, in tacit, unemphatic passages, shows us how deeply the symbols and their meaning too, had sunk into the heart of the nation. But they were at last to receive their full, precise, and definite interpretation—an interpretation which should bring the Life and Light of God home to every man, and show him, not merely that far-off in heaven light and life existed, but that they were brought close to every one's home—not merely that the Well of life was with God, as the Psalmist knew, but that it rose and ran close by the ways of Man—not merely that "we shall see light" in distant years, but that there is for us One

that is the Light of the World, which whoso followeth shall not walk in darkness.

Among other ways of setting forth the *promise* of these truths—so dear, so necessary, even when it was but a promise, and which ought to be so far more dear now that it is a promise fulfilled—were the ceremonies which the Jewish Church introduced, though not enjoined in the Pentateuch, upon the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Last Day of their sacred year.

Upon that day were kindled vast and lofty candelabra, which burnt all the night before the Temple. And upon that day priests and people descended to the Fountain of Siloam, that spring which flowed out before the foot of the Temple mount—so rich with historical and sacred associations—and the High Priest here filled a golden urn with water, which he carried back to the altar of sacrifice. Ascending the altar itself, he poured out toward the west the urn of water, and toward the east,—in another of those perpetually interlacing symbolisms, whose varying and blending lights and shades crossed so perpetually and strangely the prospect spread before the Jewish eye of divine things to come—toward the east he poured out an ewer of wine.

The whole of the Feast of Tabernacles was, as you know, a representative commemoration of the time when their forefathers had dwelt in tents in the wilderness forty years; and thus, amid rejoicings so great, that an ancient rabbi said, "He that had not seen Jerusalem on that day had never seen joy," the solemnities were brought to a close with rites which still revived the thought of those two ancient traditions of the Water which saved their lives, and the miraculous Light which guided them.

It was on this day, 'the last day, that great day of the Feast,' says St. John, in the seventh and eighth chapters of his Gospel, that Christ appeared in the Temple, and stood and with a loud voice gave the true interpretation of the ceremonies which the whole nation was now witnessing and taking part in.

Many of you know that the first eleven verses of the

eighth chapter of St. John are certainly an interpolation in that place, and that though the account which they contain is doubtless a genuine one, it is almost certainly not by the hand of St. John. At any rate, it comes in so as most markedly to interrupt the narrative of our Lord's discourse. In the end of chapter seven, He describes Himself (in allusion to the ceremony then proceeding) as the true Rock yielding the true living Water; and, in the verses immediately following the interpolated eleven verses of chapter eight, continues His discoursé by describing Himself as the true Light; thus bringing out in all its force the fulfilment in Himself, as the Son of God and true Messiah, of the teaching of these types, given of God so long ago and commemorated up to that very hour by people who had forgotten that they were to look forward, and were content only to look back to that which had been, without seeking to penetrate its true significance.

Let us now look a little more closely into what our Lord says about this living Water of Life.

On the last day, that great day of the Feast—just perhaps after the priest had poured out the water from his ewer—while the crowds were still undispersed, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink." Now mark how our Lord, while He starts from the ceremony, goes back at once to the origin of the ceremony, to its meaning. The water in the Temple was not drunk, only poured out. There was no thirsting for it and no drinking it. But Jesus returns at once to the *Rock* which was the meaning of the ceremony, and to the old scene in the desert, when the thirsting congregation wished to drink of the clear outflowing tide. "If any man *thirst* let him come to me and drink." I am the true Rock—that is, from My Person, Life, and Doctrine flows the life-giving stream. I am not the water in the precious vessel, wasted on the marble floor. I am that which this water means. Nay, not merely water, but the Rock—not merely the life, but the Source of life. "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink."

Drink what? That which the ancient water signified.

Life and strength and purity. We have but little notion of what water means to the dweller in a rainless land ; of how it forces itself upon the thoughts ; how language itself is filled with metaphors derived from it ; how all the Eastern poetry is full of allusion to it. The gushing spring is to them like life itself ; its very sound the sweetest and the greatest that ear can listen to : so that the writer who would give us but an echo of how the voice of God sounded upon his ear, tells that it was "like the voice of many waters," as the syllabled truth and love came rolling down upon his soul.

But the sound is as nothing to the purity, to the calm resistless strength, to the brightness, which the Eastern poet means when he speaks of water ; above all there is the one unique attribute of it, that in it lies, both to his land and to his people, the whole difference between life and death.

Where there is no water all is silent, with such silence of death as never meets us in our lands. Where there are abundant rills there is a richness and luxuriance of plant-life and creature-life of which we can form no conception.

But it is not in these generalities that the words of Jesus stay, they scarcely touch them. It is human thirst of which He speaks—the intensest, most maddening of misery. That craving which expressed in a human eye made Philip Sidney feel that the want of the meanest private soldier more imperiously entitled him to attention than his commander, though he too suffered : that craving which made an heroic king, while dealing thick strokes in the field, break out with an exclamation of very yearning for one cool draught from the spring where he drank as a boy, and to satisfy it his three most valiant officers brake through the rank to quench his thirst : that human thirst which in a life of suffering caused the one and only word by which Christ Himself ever drew men's attention to His own needs, saying, "I thirst," as He hung on the tree.

It is not the life and splendour of the element of which Christ says now one word. But it is, "If any man thirst."

“If there be one thirsty spirit here.” And, alas! that it should be so. The doubtful *if* which he used—ἐάν τις διψᾷ—seems to mean that it is *possible* that that great congregation which He addressed was but a barren land, wherein was no herbage and no prospect of herbage. It might even be, that they were all thirsty souls before Him and not *one* thirsty for righteousness.

For that other word which we read of this morning in our second lesson tells us that though thirst is painful yet there is a thirst which makes men happy and blessed. “Blessed are they,” said He, “that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

“They shall be filled,” sooner or later, He had said in the beginning of His ministry, and now He tells men how. “Let him come unto me and drink.” Let him know me, let him love me, let him obey me, let him trust in me, and his thirst shall cease. For righteousness shall begin to be his.

Is any thirsting like David for the purity of the water he drank when a boy, for the simplicity of innocence, for the confidence in prayer? Christ can give it him.

Is any thirsting for strength to bear the bitterness of life; is any thirsting for strength to fulfil the law of God; for strength to resist the importunities of temptation, crying out from within; for strength to resist the suggestions of an unwise friend, pointing out the way of evil, and ready to accompany him along it? Christ can give him that strength if he will come to Him.

Is any thirsting for an assurance that he shall live when time is over—live and not die when human life is past? Christ can give him this too, for He can give him the very Life itself.

Innocence restored, strength attained, life assured, all these are in the draught which it places at your lips.

But if you will read the next verse you will see that Christ promises you more than this; for any one who has really a human heart feels that this is not enough. Any one who has a wish beyond most shameful selfishness could not be satisfied to know that *his* safety and security and

strength were made sure to him—he could not help looking out for others: brothers and sisters and friends and parents—yes, and the poor and miserable—yes, and the sinful and sinning, must come in for a part of his heart. He cannot be content to be saved himself as by a boat from a wreck and have no power to hold out a hand to others. The very story of Philip Sidney moving the untasted bowl from his own lips has made many an one perhaps strong to deny himself for others; the wonderful act of David, who after all could not drink of the water procured at such risk of life, but humbly poured it on the earth as a drink-offering to God—"Who am I that I should drink of the blood of those three men?"—these stories arrest us and give back as in a mirror the nobler feelings of our hearts. We cannot even pray for ourselves alone, we feel we must give other names, and other cares, other joys and other sorrows, with our own if our prayer is to reach the ear of God.

And can we think that the all-wise, all-living Christ forgets this, as He promises life to those who, thirsting, come to Him. Look here at His next words. "He that believeth on me out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." He shall not only drink of the Rock, he shall himself be a rock, a water yielding rock for others. He that believeth on Me, he shall himself be such a rock; so that out of the hollow of it shall flow fresh streams for others. This He spake of the Spirit Which they that believe on Him should receive. Yes! once drink of Christ's spirit really, and it shall rise and flow from your own lips, full of freshness, full of progress.

I need not surely work out His idea into all the details of your lives. Is it not most true? I will not say that pointed, direct teaching is to come from every one who believes in Christ; far from it, but his conversation will be innocent in its purity like living water; the resolutions which others know he makes and see him keep will be strong, like the sustained gush of a living spring.

His life will be full of progress, like the flowing onward of a living stream fed ever from the rock.

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It will roll down obstacles along with it by the mere steadiness without violence of its pressure.

It will cleanse away impurities. It will refresh whoever comes near it.

And this will be the work of the Spirit—within he will be conscious of God's favour, even though he be conscious also of many a fault.

To Christian moralists alone of all moralists the lessening of fault, the growth of perfection, can bring no vanity, for he alone knows that it is not of himself he lives, that the life of Christ is his only life.

## SERMON VI.

### STRENGTH OF WILL.

ISAIAH I. 7.

*I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall  
not be confounded."*

THE happiest of gifts for a man to be born with into the world is Strength of Will: not that a man can by it avoid suffering, for the strong often suffer more than the weak, as in bodily sickness, so also in that sickness of the soul which is sin: not that a man can by it avoid sinning, perhaps more in amount than his fellow-men; but for this—that suffering especially raises and heightens the strong will; that when it forsakes sin it forsakes it without a sigh; does not leave half the heart behind it; breaks its chains and marches free, instead of dragging some links about for ever.

The man of strong will is thus naturally a happy man. The outside murmur of those who dislike his principles or practise sounds not half so loud in his ears as the great voice that speaks within. He has not the querulous discontented stage to pass through which is the common affliction of those who are rightly struggling to build up a strong character out of weak and yielding elements, and in their progress are so daunted by their mistakes that sometimes they are tempted by the evil fancy that they were better ere they began.

The man of strong will is a centre of union for other men. Take any large circle of friends, and mark how they



came together. You will commonly find that their first meeting-point, and still their strongest bond, is to be found in some one person of marked and decided character. He may be less able than some of them, less agreeable than others ; but it is often the decision and force of a single character which, drawing others toward himself, has drawn each toward the others.

This is so in our common life, and you may see it among yourselves. And how often has it been the case in the history of philosophical or other sects that the first group of thinkers has been drawn together and lived in the happy feeling of a material strength drawn from their common intercourse, and especially from one who was the centre of that intercourse long ere it was found that either he or they had any message for the world at large.

Thus one great section of the English Reformation had its beginnings in a knot of scholars who met simply and quietly in the room called "Germany" (as we are told), in Cambridge, to read and discuss with each other the Greek Testament and Holy Bible.

And thus that movement in the French Church which, though outwardly extinguished by rude hands, has leavened every Church and penetrated into every religious argument, was but the record of the quiet reasoning and conversation of the thoughtful men who retired at intervals to the cloister and the gardens of Port Royal. The force of character of one man, who almost disappears from the after history, often first gives the first impulse to those who win the world's recognition.

It is strength of will which gives to a man's opinions that freshness, clearness, decisiveness, which we instinctively admire and cleave to. How often have we been hurried along far from the thoughts of earlier years, far from those in which we shall at last acquiesce, by one who, when we read him, or when we talked with him, rightly or wrongly, thought he had a harbour to make for, a star to steer by, a light to lead him, though he knew not whither. We followed him instinctively awhile although our course really lay very far away. His will was strong to tread forward where he saw

truth glimmer, and we could not but attend him. Nay, it was even thus with Christ Himself. Many that had neither spirit nor heart to follow Him really, still said, like the soldiers who durst not lay a finger on Him, "Never man spake like this man;" or like the selfish crowds, who, though they could not bear His cross, yet could distinguish a strong will and a clear speech from the hazy uncertainties of others—"What new doctrine with authority is this? He speaketh not like the scribes."

Again, the strong will is ever the most flexible. It has the habit of at once obeying its convictions; like the perfectly-lined ship with perfectly-balanced helm, it answers at once to the steersman's hand.

If there has been aught wrong the repentance of the strong will is swift and thorough; if there has been even a lifetime of evil the strong will melts and flows down more readily far than the sluggish will, and takes new shapes more truly. Who had stronger, bolder wills than St. Peter and St. Paul; Peter, who took Christ Himself, and began to rebuke Him; Paul, who lived most straitly in the strictest sect and compelled the Christians to blaspheme? Yet who ever wept more bitterly than Peter when at the coming of the appointed sign he felt suddenly what he had done, what he had been? Who ever was so suddenly, so utterly transformed by a conviction as Paul by that which dashed on him as he was riding down to Damascus?

But if the great vessel swings easily to the stirring of the helm, yet what is she when her course is set and her helm is steadily held? The strong waters flash from off her prow, currents and racing seas make her quiver but cannot turn her. The more tempestuous the air, then the more wary the commander, the more sleepless the crew, the steadier the helmsman. For the strong will is not like the inanimate ship; its wariness and watchfulness and readiness make it day by day more steady to stem opposition: the man grows more and more self-controlled, more and more straightforward, more calm, more clear of his aim.

So then, happiness within, attractiveness toward others, ease of repentance and amendment, firmness against opposition, are the splendid dower which the strong will brings to the soul: these are heart jewels, which we may acquire and multiply by making our wills strong if they are not so, by keeping them strong if God has made them so.

It is then our wisdom to ask, How shall we keep or make our wills strong? And first we shall observe that we cannot do this merely by persisting in having "our own way," as we call it. Our own way may be wrong; and no one ever uses the word *strength* in connection with crime or fault—never calls a sinful, a wilful, or a violent man a *strong* man. The world itself has settled that in its common language.

The wilful sinner may be called a resolute or a determined character, but never a strong character; we speak of a man's being *hard*, and *hardened* in sin, when we would speak of the opposite of weakness; but never of his growing strong, or being strengthened.

The reason is evident, namely, that wilful sinning is only using a will in the direction in which it is easiest to use it. And this cannot make the will stronger any more than a mind would grow strong which employed itself only on intellectual work which presented no difficulty to it. I have heard boys wish (to take a very familiar illustration) that they were being taught along with those who were below them in the classification of the school. They think that they would make more rapid progress if their work were easier to them. Just the reverse: all the progress is made by grappling with real difficulties, not by traversing things easy. And so the will must make progress by avoiding things to which it is prone, and by aiming at things which it simply knows in any way to be good, although for the time being it may be that they are not fully desired.

We know that there are times for all of us when we see our duty more clearly than at other times; we know there are hours when God seems to speak to our hearts and to move them. There are moments when we feel afraid of

some course which we are pursuing and of some end we wish to accomplish—moments when we are ashamed of our thoughts, and resolve that we will put them away and think them no more. There are times when we are grieved at being idle, even if we have been idle habitually; when we hate the thought of falsehood, or of meanness, and wish we could be like some one whom we know who never seems to have any temptation to do wrong; wish we could at once become what our hearts agree with the Bible in telling us we ought always to be.

For times there are also when there rises before us a noble Ideal of what we ought to be and we feel an impulse to believe we might be. We behold as in a mirror an image not all unlike ourselves, and yet how very pure, how very strong, how very truthful, how very friendly, and how manly. What is that Ideal? It is "the Will of God concerning us," as St. Paul says. It is indeed what we may each become by the power of the Spirit of God. That ideal was the object of the daily prayer of him who "laboured fervently in prayers" for his charge, "that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Into this ideal we cannot at once pass. But we can be ever approaching it. It is not in human nature to make that sudden change, but it is perfectly possible to make a beginning. And for this purpose we must call in at once the assistance of that very will itself to act upon our will; for there is no power in us higher, more primary, than the will. If the will is to be affected, the will itself must do the work.

Suppose one resolve be made; then here at once our will begins to be of constant use to us, and to grow stronger in itself. Our will is not really acting at all when it is working out, however strongly, a natural inclination. The will is only strengthened when it is set to active work, and to difficult work, something which we have clearly seen to be our duty although when we come to do it we find the pursuit of it tax our strength exceedingly.

You would not say that the muscles of a man were

strong who, like an Indian devotee, had from long continuance in one posture made them so rigid that no force could bend them.

Just as our bodily powers are only made stronger by exertion, by overcoming difficulties, by persevering against a certain sensation of pain day by day, so with the will : we must exert it in doing what is hard to do, instead of resting at ease ; in conquering opposition, in absolute battling with the uneasiness and discomfort which the first efforts of the will give us. We often do not find an instant pleasure in trying to be good ; but we must persevere, and the good and the pleasure will come together at last. It often flurries us when we first try ; it may make others smile ; a little trouble in being good tires and frightens us. But to overcome all this must be our first object, and is the way towards becoming strong.

There is a terrible example of a strong will corrupting itself by mere pertinacity, till it became weak as a child's, in the history of Saul. A great man, made for a leader, full of attractive qualities, strong and bold in his first zeal in his first wars ; yet the last we hear of him is his creeping by night to consult a sorceress. What had happened between to make such a change ? A course of wilful persistence in his own way. It made him, not stronger, but weaker, even to the extremity of weakness. His sparing the Amalekites, his sacrificing unlawfully, his attempts to destroy David, were all sins of wilfulness, choosing his own way, what pleased him, not what was hard for him ; and so he was not only driven farther from God, but his confidence in his own good intentions, in his own power, was weakened time after time, and self-distrust rose up and pervaded him in place of his own strong will, till at last, as we said, he sought a little support, a miserable prop for his failing heart, in superstition.

If partly through wilfulness, partly through what we would fain call venial faults, or at worst errors on the right side, springing from easiness, good-nature, compliance, we enfeeble our wills as boys, we can but expect to grow up weak men, and when we are full-grown still to go on mis-

taking wilfulness for strong will. Thus all his days a man may be sinking, and even though he sigh after heaven itself, may come no nearer to it; it glimmers far away and unattainable,—

“And he like one whose footsteps halt  
Tossing in immeasurable sand.”

Lastly, is there any time, is there any religious exercise, in which our ideals may certainly grow brighter, or in which we may depend upon God Himself to infuse new strength into our wills? I can have no hesitation in saying that the recorded experience of ages answers, “Yes, in the Holy Communion such a time comes, such a gift is given.” As endless as it is simple is the witness of those who, confessing themselves unable and not over eager to trace the links between man and God, have put on record what they found and knew. There, they have said, the will of God grows clearer; there the ideal of Christ’s holiness comes out with distinctness, yet (strange and true) blends with the ideal of what is possible for themselves, and new forces lift them gently toward both. They listen, they believe, and they find it true.

The voice of the Patriarch falls enriched with new meaning on their heart. “Pass not away. I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on, for therefore are ye come.” And they answer, “So do as thou hast said.”

## SERMON VII.

### HINDRANCES TO INFLUENCE.

HEB. xi. 34.

*“ Out of weakness were made strong.”*

THIS is the history of all the souls whom Christ loves ; all whom He is drawing daily nearer and nearer to Him unseen in the world ; all whom He will gather about His holy feet for ever in the world to come.

It is the very contrary of the history of man apart from God and Christ. The first of men that we read of fell ; out of strength he was made weak. And every day we see how those who are not Christ's are out of weakness made weaker, until out of weakness they die.

It is the experience of any one who really tries and who has estimated the results of his efforts afterwards (not pretentiously at all, but simply and candidly) that so long as he is really seeking to know and keep the laws of God, to do his duty to God and man, to remember Christ in His death and in His resurrection, and by that remembrance to quicken his energies for good, sincerely praying and trying to live up to his prayer, so long he is really out of weakness being made strong.

The sense of weakness is painful, and the sense of strength most pleasurable. The sense of weakness in itself is weakening, saddening, and depressing. The sense of strength is, as it were, itself a new strength. When we fear that the burden and heat of the day are growing too much for us ; when the load seems too tight upon our

shoulders, and we begin to stagger under it, because meanwhile we are faint with sultriness or parched with a burning drought; when we begin to think the weight must be laid down, and the cool shade sought—still we cannot think of such freedom and of such rest without deep distress, for it is one thing to have earned them by carrying the load through till evening, and quite another thing to give up under the oppressive sense of weakness.

Now, such a sense of weakness cannot but haunt all men who take up fairly the burden which God has given each to bear, who unflinchingly expose themselves to the heat of this world's unfavourable climate in which we bear it. If any feel it not, he is but like one who says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knoweth not that he is wretched and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked." Out of Christ, without the strength of Christ, such he is; and even in Christ, dwelling and walking in Christ, a man dwells and walks a long while before his character is braced to ever-ready energy, before he either can, or ought to say, with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

Yet, of course, many of you there are to whom thoughts like these are not as yet familiar. They do not naturally spring up out of youth and health.

But still I doubt not there are hearts among us which have this sense of weakness and find it painful, and none more so than those who most earnestly wish to be strong, to be Christians not in name only but in power. There are still more who have great need to be roused from a foolish dream of strength into a sight of things as they really are.

For even though the burden of the day is with all possible care adjusted to the strength of the bearer, though the wind is tempered to you in the place where God has set you, though no demands which any of you can think undue or disproportionate are made upon you, yet within yourselves, and in your companionship with others, there arise temptations which beset you, sins which attract you; indulgences, follies, idlenesses, and many other things which look very uninviting in their true colours, and



sound very ill when spoken of by their true names, but which are called among both boys and men by names that colour such offences untruly, or, at least, render them colourless, and which each time that they present themselves and allure you into their nets, appear for a short while very pleasant and much to be desired.

When once we have learnt the difficulties of resistance to these things, and the ease with which we are carried away again, in spite of every resolution and every hope, then, indeed, the sense of weakness begins to be borne in upon our souls.

And when a young Christian first begins to see—what too many are blind to—what an important thing every single personal influence is in a community; when he observes how one untruth suggests another; how one act of idleness or disobedience is copied in another; how one single boy, careless of speech, or hard in conduct, flings a poisonous seed abroad into the air which may seem to fly away on the wind out of his sight, but settles down somewhere, and then springs up and bears plant, flower, and fruit of sin in another soul,—a boy with a clear intelligence or warm heart who sees these things soon begins to steady himself against the evil in himself if not in others. But still his resolutions have not lasted many weeks, sometimes not many days, before he has had something to regret, some cause to know that he has overvalued his powers.

And yet we have no right any of us to be inwardly sad, or inwardly fretted at our own inability to meet the demands made on us, to cope with opposition, to stem the crowd of faults and follies that seem threatening to bear down good habits. Consider God's ancient promise that "one of us shall chase a thousand"—what does this mean but that God is nearest when gloom is thickest, darkest? Remember Christ's perpetual word to the weak, the impotent, the blind, the lame—"Be of good cheer." Let Christ's, *Θάρσει* ring in our ears whenever we despond. Be of good cheer—Rise, He calleth thee.

And again, let him remember the crowd of worthies of whom the chapter of my text (Heb. xi.) speaks "who out of

weakness were made strong"—let him think of such an one as Jacob; remember how unfavourably he, with his meanness, his evasions, his falseness, once contrasted with Esau the bold, the valiant, the impulsive: remember how the two careers ended; how Esau never advanced one step beyond his natural attractiveness; how Jacob, with many troubles and many sufferings, commended his weakness into the hands of God, until out of weakness he was made strong.

Remember such an one as Moses; how he was much afraid to undertake God's work; wished to resign it, because he was slow of speech and of a slow tongue; remember how out of weakness he was made strong. Remember his eighty years of awful leadership; his government, his laws, how he fashioned a nation that survives all nations. Remember such an one as Gideon—his modest shrinking—"Oh my Lord! wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Remember the great deliverances which he wrought; the restoration of true religion which he achieved. Remember David the princely, the heroic, the very voice of God's church for ever—once a shepherd-boy, small, and of no reputation; out of weakness made strong. Remember Peter. How weak he was so long as he was confident in his own strength, how, when he thought he was ready to die for his Lord, he denied Him. And then, remember how, having by a fall laid to heart learned that no amount of human strength can keep a man from falling, he learned next that any amount of strength is to be had from God; and even in a few days rose to be the leader of the Apostles and their glorious company, and by the boldness and strength in which he spake enrolled in one hour three thousand men as disciples of the Cross.

Of all these lofty spirits there was not one who did not either of himself in the first instance truly feel his own weakness, or was not brought to feel it by the discipline of God, before he was allowed to do anything great. For wise strength is not the child, but the parent of confidence.

Jacob's flight and servitude, Moses's despondency, Gideon's modesty, David's exile, Peter's tears, bear witness to the road by which the chosen ones have ever reached their heritage.

The beginning of strength is to know our weakness ; and yet we must not dwell on it. The worst thing possible would be of course to hover over the thought, "How very weak I am ; I am always going wrong ;" to excuse ourselves because of it, "I cannot help this or that," or to moan over it. We thus let humbleness itself canker, or choke like a weed the springs of life. Yet we *must* from time to time take one honest look at our weakness ; we must have a solid sensible conviction as to what it is, or we shall not find the remedy for it ; we must, on the other hand, never acquiesce in it as a necessity of our constitution. And then, if that Accusing Spirit taunt us with our weakness, as he will, in order to keep us weak and low ; if some of those who ought to strengthen us "cast the same in our teeth," as the sons of the prophets told Elisha that his influence was passing away from him with the departure of Elijah, that his Master and his strength would leave him together ; that he was nothing by himself ; we have but to answer as he answered : "Yea, I know it, hold ye your peace"—I know my weakness, but it concerns you not—Me and my Lord it does concern ; and He out of weakness will make me strong. We seek His strength—power from without, from above, but we must ask for strength reasonably, knowing what we want and why. To know this truthfully is like the way in which we prepare for massive building. We do not lay the stones upon the surface ; we dig deep, and clear away the light-drifted soil, that the deeper compressed earth may receive the hard-grained concrete and the stone.

Now, would it be natural that we should *feel* ourselves growing stronger ? When we have passed a considerable time in acquiring strength, we shall no doubt know that we *are* stronger, as finding ourselves able to do or to bear more than we formerly could. But we shall *not* be able to observe the daily growth which God's grace

produces, any more than we notice our physical growth day by day.

But how do you increase your strength—all strength? Is it not by keeping in steady use and practice such strength as you begin with? turning it to account, bringing it to bear on the opportunities which occur?

The first point in *using* this strength is what we call “singleness of heart.” As strength of body accomplishes its end only by singleness and unity of effort, the whole frame moving to one object, strung to one aim, flung upon one stroke; as strength of mind accomplishes its end only by concentration of thought, single devotion of faculties and energies to the task it undertakes; so with strength of spirit—it will not accomplish its task, it will not gather new powers, without *singleness of aim*.

Religious persons often sorrowfully and sincerely feel that many lives of worldly men might become very high, very pure, and noble, if only there were a conscious aim after serving God added to it; we think it sorrow and shame that such gifts as some of God's sons possess from Him should be diverted from His use, and used—is it not so?—against Him who gave them. But then it should be very visible that *we* wish that the lives which we perhaps do really in a way consecrate should be *worthy* lives; not lives of weakness but strength; lives of sense and energy, not of mere feeling. We must be increasing as well as sanctifying our own gifts, such as they are. It is not more single-hearted to dedicate to God idle lives and unimproved gifts, than it is to alienate from Him great gifts and great activity. Again, we must be single-hearted in another way; we must not think ourselves and our friends excused by our larger views from some degrees of life-strictness. We must not think the same rules hard on us which are proper for the rest; we must often bow our own neck to a yoke which we think desirable for others.

If we know how bright all things would be if it were more common to value duty above pleasure, we must not be making compromises ourselves; putting off more trying duties till we have taken our milder pleasures. If others

are to be roused to hearty work, we must not spare ourselves more grievous trouble. If we would fain that others should have the feelings which we have about habits that are depraving and degrading, then we too must be visibly aiming higher than the point at which we ourselves stand. If we are a little forwarder we cannot afford to rest any more than they while the goal is so very far off from us all. Others know well enough that we are not perfect. They will see that to rise to our level only is not a sufficiently noble ambition to attract souls. The question with them is, are we too struggling against our faults as we wish them to do against theirs; are we moving towards that ideal which is set before us as well as before them?

If the master wishes his labourers would leave off *evil* words, is he struggling to leave off *hasty* words? If we would fain for Christ's dear sake see others a little more thoughtful and a little more devout, then in our own case does our study witness to secret prayers, lonely struggles, gradual victories?

The least speck of intended doubleness decays the root of spiritual strength. The moment one begins to think it safe or possible to allow any fault of our own to be uncorrected for a time, there is the dropping off of strength and growth, the sapping of power, the sacrifice of real influence.

There are two weaknesses which, in common social life, beset those two kinds of character which are generally and naturally most influential for good. One influential form of goodness belongs to those who set the example of sweet temper, and pleasant ways, and a cheerful spirit. Another, and a higher type, is that of the self-denying, constant spirit which will not suffer itself to dream of pleasure till duty is accomplished. No character is really so influential as this; though the power is often latent for a long time, it does almost a *strange* work; acts like a spell in secret; self-sacrifice is, in reality, the mightiest force we know of.

Yet a weakness dogs its steps too often, no less injurious

to it than that which spoils the attractiveness of the first character I named. Self-indulgence is the snare of the one ; severity of the other.

The proneness to self-indulgence which hangs about the good-tempered, even-minded person, is a great bar to the good which he would otherwise effect.

The readiness to be sour and harsh and rude which follows those who are truly struggling to be self-denying in the highest degree, is too often a stumbling-block in the way of others, who might, except for this, have been ready to follow some clear-souled pattern of self-denial. And so in a hundred other ways : every one, however noble his aim, has some besetting sin, and that not undiscoverable to himself, but actually clinging to his very worth like shadow to substance ; and he who should do his Lord's work undividedly is too often undoing at one hour some of the work he has done in another. Thus it will be, unless each recognises heartily his own fault and his own snare, and heartily seeks not *one* line of Christian duty but *the* one duty of a Christian,—which is to be like Christ.

It has been finely said that the wedge, be it never so small, that has a single edge, will cleave its way through anything : tough fibre and strong rock fly asunder before it : and so all things give way before the single-minded man : but that the wedge with a double edge cleaves nothing ; it is itself pounded, and broken in pieces between the blows that fall on it, and the block that it should rend. So is every one who sets to work in Christ's cause with reservations.

Look to it, then, that the edge upon your lives be clean, and sharp, and bright ; for otherwise you will be first bent, then broken, then flung away as worthless.

But God give us grace—(all of us here—for are we not all fellow-workers in one cause—fellow-workers against the faults in ourselves and the faults in society ?)—that it be not so with us, but that from the eldest to the youngest, highest to the lowest, we, out of weakness, may be made strong ; our querulous, unhealthy, shrinking spirits, made cheerful, sound, and brave ; cheerful with the good cheer that Christ

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commands ; sound with the soundness that His touch bestows ; brave with the courage of those who know and trust their leader ; who love Him ; love His every step, and whose one pride is, that they are His men ; whose dearest ambition would be to be made like unto Him, and to whom even that majestic hope is not denied.

## SERMON VIII.

### • RISKING OUR INFLUENCE.

2 SAM. xxi. 17.

*"Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel."*

THE personal influence of King David was the spell by which Israel was reunited after long separations and out of great diversities of interests. The terrible defeats which Saul experienced, and the sense that God's favour had been long withdrawn from him, had not destroyed the revived spirit of union which the first creation of a king had engendered. But in David Israel became once more a nation. His own heroic courage, the memory of his youthful exploits, the able group of warriors and councillors, whom he gradually drew about his throne, the conquests on every border, the dispossession of the heathen, the erection of a capital city, the restoration of the unity of religious worship, the spiritual tone breathed by him into the recently half-mechanical observances of ritual, the penetrating power of his most holy poems—all these characters, and others more delicate still, made him the typical man, the representative man of a race whose hereditary pride, whose passionate valour, whose constant and predominant sense of religion marked them out from the whole world as most difficult to mould and rule.

A skilful general, a gallant soldier, a perfect bard, a saint of God, and, above all—(may we not say—*above all*, for power to win and teach the hearts of the thoughtful) a



life-long penitent after a great fall : this was the man whom his generals well called "The Light of Israel;" this was he on whose life and name they felt depended the solidity of a yet fragmentary, a half-barbarised nation. He was, as it were, the one lamp of God burning in a darkened sanctuary; the one pledge they had that strength, glory, and wisdom, are not really of us, but of God; the one man who, at the head of the state, saw far enough into eternal things to recognise this, and to set it forth every hour.

To take him with them to battle was a sure pledge of victory; when he pressed onward against the Philistines his "valiants" and his people followed; when he, with his now white head, stepped out against the Son of the Giant and raised the arm that was mighty still, though not with the might of youth, the moral ascendancy which his people felt over the hosts of the Philistines was worth an army. And yet the good men and true who surrounded him felt that the risk was now too great to run.

They must resign the king's presence; they must not peril the most precious life in the blindness of war; the hard work which has to be done they must do themselves. They must fight for David, thenceforth in David's absence; that he should fight with them is too dangerous.

"Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel." His personal influence is invaluable to the tribes; it is the most precious thing that God has given them as a nation. And therefore, valuable as it is on the field of battle, they will not use it there at all: they must keep it for the good of Israel in higher fields, and for nobler achievements in the elevation of the people.

The victor's wreath graced him well as a boy: but his grey head cannot be risked for the most glorious return upon his shield.

I think that every one may look on this story with profit. It is the power of personal influence which is the best gift that God gives in smaller measure, or in larger, to every one. It is our power of personal influence which we throw away too lightly, as temper, or fancy, or the whim

of the moment leads ; it is the personal influence of our friends which we support, all too little and too feebly in our vanity, as if to laugh at a friend's expense, a sneer at a friend's foible, or a slight disparagement of his consistency, were no loss to him, and for ourselves perhaps might slightly magnify the opinion of our unbiased discernment and our frank expression.

But there is none too much light in Israel. If one man's name is not now, as in the old heroic savage times, a beacon blaze for all, so much the more careful should we be of all the rays of scattered light which here and there betoken that God's gifts are present.

When there is no sun in our heaven, who would extinguish one ray of the fair starlight ? Very careful ought we to be of our personal influence, very tender of the personal influence of others. Among all the reasons why variances and jealousies among Christian men, in neighbourhoods, in societies, in churches, are hateful, and undo the work of God, no reason is more clear than this, that nothing can so undermine the good influences of others, and prevent their effecting that work which God sent them all out to do.

In a society like ours, which, from highest to lowest, forms itself into group after group, circle within circle, no one can do greater harm than by lessening that particular influence for good which his own, or any circle, or any member of it, enjoys—or, when he is identified with any group, whose special province it is to lead, by bringing down on it any disparagement of the honour, the consistency, the purity of tongue and firmness of act, which becomes them, by being careless of his own words or ways.

You may not so use your personal influence ; you cannot, without great harm, identify it with anything poor or low ; you cannot give way to temper, you cannot sacrifice to pleasure, you cannot override loyalty, without losing influence ; one of the first duties of many is to deserve to be trusted ; no good in this world can they do unless they *are* trusted ; and never will they be trusted without deserving it : no factitious supports will keep up their credit.

Those who surround us find out unerringly whether they are trustworthy, and personal influence at last depends entirely on whether the person is to be depended on.

Some suffer under the sense of a lack of influence which ought to belong to their standing: feel that they are not consulted, that they are not relied on: but reliance on you you must create for yourself: no one could rely on you simply because he determined that he would.

It would be a useful test, if not the highest, to apply to some questions which arise: "How would this affect personal influence?" "How would this act on the mind of such an one who trusts me? He will trust me, or not trust me by instinct; I never can by reasoning persuade him **that** he ought to trust me." Confidence grows, it is not **made** new for use. You who wish to have firm friends; you who wish to occupy well your standing-points of influence; you who have ambitions after a worthy work in the world; beware how you risk your personal influence in little matters, or that of any single person whose aims are like to your own. Take care that you do not quench one ray of the Light that is in Israel!

But yet again we may rise higher. Let us not risk the Light that is in our own souls. We all of us own some light of God burning in the dark places of our hearts. Bring not those sanctities into danger. There is always risk lest the bold life of boyhood when first begun, should for a time weaken the tenderness of home thoughts, the power that has clung to the name of mother or of sister; but keep up that love with steadfastness, with self-denial if need be: let no words, nor thoughts, nor books, nor companions, be allowed, which are palpably inconsistent with your reverent love of them.

Puny dread of consequences—false standards of honour, combine to weaken the resolution which every father has suggested to every son, that nothing untrue, nothing evasive, should ever slip from the lip. Rekindle that Light of Israel.

Things which he told you were foolish or wrong (and your heart went with him as he spoke) now seem less so,

because some of those about you do them. Let your father's word outweigh theirs : do not send it out to do battle with the fancies of companions : hold it sacred.

The reckless love of mere mirth may break up your reverence for sacred words, for sacred names, for holy things ; your natural sense that prayer to God is a help, a strength, and an extension of your best moments to the whole day, is being invaded by the mere carelessness that cannot find time for such private worship, that distracts your thoughts at public worship.

But keep these sanctities safe by inviolable habit : pray to Him who sees in secret. Take care not to bring them into collision with ruder, harder forces. These inborn or early learnt holinesses are the most precious things you bring here : do not risk them for a day : be very reverent about them. Fence them on their throne.

## SERMON IX.

### ESCAPING THE AVERAGE.

PSALM iv. 4.

*“Commune with your own heart and in your chamber and be still.”*

THE Great Forerunner, who, because he prepared the way for the First Coming of Christ, is commemorated in the services of this and next Sunday, is before us not only as a grand historic person and martyr-saint, but as a living example.

For his work is ours. What he wrought single-handed is become a daily duty : to prepare the way of Christ's Advent, and that on a scale not less, but greater than before.

Just as St. Paul occupies the first part of the Epistle to the Ephesians with a doctrine difficult to grasp in proportion to its mystic sublimity, viz. :—the final and already developing unity of the Human Race with the Son of God, and then passes on to tell us in simplest words how God's infinite and incomprehensible purpose in this matter is only to be carried out by each one of us doing his duty to the utmost, and realising in himself the image of Christ, so far as the imperfection of the material will allow such image to be formed in it : so of the Advent of Christ. Christ's coming to earth is to be realised by the preparation of His way in every heart. Each must be to himself and to his friend what John was to the people of Israel, an earnest and courageous believer in His coming.

But at first sight how great the contrast between him and

anything that is possible now, even to the holiest person. What can there be in common between his life and ours? Even supposing that we felt all his love for the Lamb of God, were quite as earnest to be His friend and live for Him, what single point of contact is there which could make the Baptist anything that we can call *an example* to ourselves?

Now, John Baptist was almost as unlike a Jew of his own day as he is unlike us. Though not unexampled, his hermit life, his dress, his food, his abode, were, of course, utterly discrepant from city life or village life in any age. And life in cities and in villages was the very essence of Jewish life. How different the life was which our Lord had led; how different had been his natural means and opportunities of observation is seen plainly enough in the subjects of his parables. While John's illustrations are from forest, field, and stream, axe, and threshing-floor, and river stones, our Lord speaks as one who had seen the world and marked it. The provincial king's visit of homage and investiture; the royal marriage, with the rich robe presented to each invited guest; the ready wit of the knavish steward, the court of justice with its daily eastern idleness, and wantonness of decision; the country home, and the town debauchery of the young son. These are the scenes out of which Christ draws material of instruction about the Kingdom of Heaven.

John's position, as a boy and a young man, was utterly lonely: he is not merely a Prophet of God, marked as that position would have been. The Prophet belonged to the people. John is always called a "Messenger," one who has more to do with Him from Whom he comes. By a singular but ingenious symbol the Eastern Churches, playing on the original word for "messengers," have represented him ever with angel's wings, meaning thereby, of course, simply to typify his separation, his unlikeness to his own race, the half-heavenly character of his personal life; and this was, indeed, a just appreciation of his position.

And now turn to our own. In this country, and in this

age of the world, circumstances seem to force every single person into conditions to which John's life has no kind of relation, and to except none.

Our very life is to learn all we can of others ; not only from the writings of authors, or the lips of teachers, but from the lives and words and ways of friends ; not only from older friends, but from each other, from those younger than ourselves. This is the very idea of modern life. Every one is to influence and be influenced by every one. This is the theory of all society ; and what wonder that it finds special embodiment in all theories of education which are supposed adequate to the demands of modern life.

To know and use the thoughts of others ; to know, to speak, to write their language and their style ; in hours not given to study to learn to live with others by learning to be like them in tone, language, views ; to get peculiarities abraded : this is our aim. If not homogeneous with the world we are held useless. Our very intellectual education has taken the turn of excluding originality, but far more so our social and moral education. And here we approach the great difficulty which is beginning to be felt more and more widely by religious thinkers. And that is, that in all this education we tend to reduce *principles*, religious and moral principles, to the level and standard of the mass. While not only St. Paul, but Socrates, and all high spirits, Christian or Pagan, say, with one voice, "Live above the world," we are drifting perhaps into a state of circumstances in which the world is supposed to be a sufficient guide. While we take the multitude for our rule in so many things, it can only be by earnest effort that any of us will be able to refuse to take the world into the secret chambers of his heart.

Granted that the standard of a society like ours is elevating to *most* ; that *most* who come here would be lower, narrower, poorer in their sense of honour and duty, were they left to selfish and isolated lives at home, amid undiscerning kindness and indulgence, that can see nothing amiss in one so dear ; *does* (let me ask in all love), does the public

tone elevate *all*? has modesty nothing to shrink from? has perfect truth no conventions to dread? has early piety no shock to sustain? simple, diligent duty no hindrance to encounter? and does this boldness, this conventional standard, this insensitiveness, or worldliness, or selfishness, do no harm? Has evil no reign when he uses these influences against the higher spirits, the more enlightened, the more holy? I am not speaking of mere wickedness which would be reprobated everywhere, but the *average tone*, which it is the fashion to trust and to bow down to. Can you say that it is a safe guide or standard on the most important points? that it uses well, or has a proper feeling for the best and choicest characters?

Now, as regards these themselves, it is argued—"Yes, but our public opinion has also a good effect even on them. It breaks through their isolation which would end in selfishness, and brings into practical life energies that would be dormant." I have my fears that it may sometimes substitute a subtler selfishness, and repress rather than encourage the highest kind of energy. Even granting that it *trains*, it also *bruises*; granting that it braces, it spoils bloom.

What, then, is the remedy? How shall we at once gain the great good of public life for the many, and yet not make all life a mere sacrifice to the third-rate? How shall we discipline mentally and morally those who might too soon pass from thought to dreaming? develop independence, originality, heavenly-mindedness, each in its highest degree? and yet not sacrifice to these such as are equally dear to God, and form the staple of the world?

Could these questions be answered, we should have a perfect society. The Church, and each particular portion of it, would be the body and the members of Christ indeed.

The lessons of the life of John the Baptist seem to have some bearing on these questions. He was, indeed, original, independent, and dwelt "communing with the skies." Yet he loved the people well, and the people loved him. The contentment of private soldiers, and the honesty of tax-gatherers, and quiet consciences for ordinary people, and



liberality towards each other, these were the things in which he took an interest. These were the things which he was able to persuade them to in the world—the while he washed away their sins, and preached the Lamb of God to them.

So in all places and times ought higher minds and souls to care for the simple duties and happinesses of those who surround them, while for themselves they eschew the world and live to God.

Society—yes, our society—would attain something of that perfection which God sets before us as our aim, if those whose hearts are touched by God would follow His leading, and not shrink into themselves or bow down to lower views and habits; not fall back from the promises of their baptism and confirmation into the world's standard.

Where was it that St. John gained his vast influence, so that when Christ came at last He found everywhere men ready to listen to Him, which, but for St. John, He would not have done?

The answer is, no doubt, that it was in retirement and loneliness that St. John, like so many others, gained that power—in the use, that is, which he made of lonely hours. For solitude in itself has no magic influence, and converse with sky and fields leaves the peasant as ignorant of God and of himself as the streets would.

But, in the retirement for which in that time and climate the wilderness gave the best of opportunities, he gained clear views and he gained courage.

It might be absurd for any one nowadays to go to a mountain, or to a river, to seek or to teach wisdom; but it is not absurd to make retirement and real thought and prayer a steady part of our life. Our Lord did not contemplate wildernesses for people of the towns; but He did often speak to them about praying in their own little room with closed doors.

The flashes of good sense and right opinion which often cross us; the true perception that things temporal are not worthy to be compared to things eternal; the assurance that it would be better to die than to lie; the

conviction that it would be better to lose all worldly things than to profane God's name, or to defile ourselves ; these fragments of truth, which float often across our brain, would be rendered ours indeed, would become part of our fixed principles, part indeed of ourselves, if we would, instead of just letting them come and go, enter into that little room of which Christ spoke, and close the door, as he says, and fix our minds for a short time earnestly on such ideas ; and pray to God to give us real and practical assurance and certainty about the Truth, and grace to live up to it, and faithfulness to that grace.

And the same process would, while it gave us these clear views, give us also courage. If we were quite sure of the Truth, we should generally be bold enough to suffer for it.

Original thought is the only power which rules others. I do not mean novel thought, reaching things which have been never grasped before : but *original* thought, which in us has a proper birthplace and development. If you have thought out a thing for yourself, instead of receiving it at second-hand, or if the thought infused into your mind by another has germinated and brought forth fruit which is distinctly your own, or if something imparted to you comes as the solution of a difficulty which you have yourself discovered, and to which you sought an answer, how much more real, substantial, fixed in your memory, is that knowledge than any other ; how much more effective ? So in character and life. If there is much of your own effort in your simplest belief and practice, belief and practice are far more your own, and to others far more influential.

Use yourselves, therefore, not to live always in a *din*, not always in a turmoil ; let not your character be made up of endless patchwork fragments of the thoughts, the opinions, the feelings, which you have caught from others.

As there is but one truth and one righteousness, results in right and well-principled souls may not be very different outwardly, for it is only toward one truth and one righteousness that we can walk, but the difference between the two lies in the effectiveness which the two characters possess.

A mass of tiny multiplying mirrors set in the lamp's rays may be dazzling as the lamp itself; but one light is fed from within, and *is* light; the other is but an image.

Saints of old gave a year or two of their lives, many gave a forty-days, to gain clear views, and high courage for after use by thought and prayer. This may probably be always impossible for many of you. But you have as yet no idea what effect it would have to give even an hour or two to such thought, a forty-minutes to such prayer.

"Commune with your own heart and in your chamber and be still;" think till you get clear views of right and wrong; pray till you get courage to love Christ more than you fear a schoolfellow.

Even here it may be done, not without difficulty at first. I know how true the answer is—"I have tried to think, but I am disturbed by the influx of so many other thoughts. I try to pray, but such trivial things interrupt me, that my prayers themselves almost seem incoherent."

Of course it is so, and will be so at first.<sup>o</sup> But a little effort overcomes the difficulty to a great degree, and it is better to do it imperfectly, than not to do it at all.

One who exercised wider influence over the lower middle classes of a foreign country than perhaps any one in this last century, has told us how he began to cultivate his own communion with God among the shepherd<sup>s</sup> lads with whom his school-boy days were spent. "We had an hour in which to eat and rest," he says, "in the middle of the day, and when, with my face down on the ground, I seemed like the rest to sleep, then I was praying to my God." "Ah!" he said, "that was a goodly time! and when we walked home through the woods, if I was alone, I prayed aloud, and if my companions were with me then I prayed low."

There are no times, no places, no companies in which we may not, if we wish, so gain by degrees conviction of the Truth, and courage to maintain it.

## SERMON X.

### LEADERS ASTRAY.

MATT. XV. 14.

*“ Can the blind lead the blind ? ”*

THE frequent allusions which there are in the Psalms and throughout all Scripture to the dangers presented by pit-falls, by snares, by open pits, or ditches, as being an apt resemblance to the spiritual falls to which men are liable in their walk through the world, and thence in danger of being maimed or even killed,—of being drowned,—of being starved for want of help—all these metaphors are taken from a state of country and a class of life-habits which have no existence among us.

How frequent they are any one will notice who recalls for a moment passages of this sort, “ Fear and the pit and the snare are upon thee, O inhabiter of the earth.” “ Let them fall into the pit that they never rise up again.” Prisoners lie “ in the pit wherein is no water.” “ They shall go down into the sides ” (the rock-hewn sides) “ of the pit.” “ If any man have an ox or an ass fallen into a pit on the Sabbath-day ; ” or, as in the text, the Blind-led Blind will “ fall into the ditch.”

If you remember how first the whole land of Palestine was irrigated by canals or dykes ; then, how all the water that was to be used through the long, dry summer had to be stored in tanks—watched (as now sometimes) by a couple of soldiers, to prevent the slightest waste : again, how the usual way of trapping wild beasts or the larger kinds of

deer was by pitfalls, then how all the permanent buildings were of stone quarried close to the cities; and lastly how careless a half-civilized nation always is in protecting the careless from any dangers, how open and unenclosed the whole country was, how even in and about Athens all the wells were open, you will soon see (if you have never thought of it before) that a danger which in England would never occur to us was in Palestine an everyday danger, and so how natural become the frequent metaphors which we perhaps should never have thought of employing.

Thus, then, our Lord's proverbial saying that the Blind-led would, leader and led together, fall into the pit or dyke, was a homely fact which every one would be able to transfer into a spiritual region at once. They could understand that if men at that time were in the habit of relying on people who knew no more of God and of eternal truths than they did themselves, such reliance was very foolish—was even wicked, and would lead to hurt and distress, if not worse.

But however the face of our land may be different, yet the face of our spiritual country remains the same. Still in the land of our thoughts and feelings there are many falls for the unwary, places which are not properly marked and fenced; still, even if there are no Pharisees and Scribes, who take your souls in hand, and tell you to neglect such things as duty to father and mother, in order that you may attend to trifles which they tell you are important, there are still plenty of blind guides among your own selves whom other trusting blind ones believe, when they say they see and offer their arms to take you into smooth ways.

Now I will take three things in which the world at large and you here at school are very blind, and in which you *like* to have blind guides, and are persuaded that they see very well, and are quite fit to lead you.

The first thing shall be one in which you are misled, but not so much misled as the world outside is. The other two shall be things in which you are very much more misled

than the world is ; things with regard to which the world of elder persons looks at you with kindness, and knows you will think differently by and by.

The first thing is the Love of Riches, and here perhaps you may be much startled to think that I should accuse you of that in any form. You would think me much more likely to accuse you of Waste. And of course there can be here no sordid pursuit of wealth such as is to the young often revolting. Often it is the vice of those who have been wasteful in youth, but it is an elderly, not a boyish vice. However, I infer from this that wastefulness is not so very remote from that same pursuit of wealth. Pursuit of wealth is but the love of those means which wastefulness also loves, grown more cool and calculating. There is a most true sense in which Waste is a part of the Love of Riches. But I mean a little more than this. I mean that, taking boys who in all other points are equal, the rich boy, or the boy who is injudiciously supplied with money, finds *that* a means of getting more comfort and more consideration. The fact that he is better dressed, that he has showier books, more expensive articles, that you gather from the hints which escape him that he lives in more expensive ways at home than you do, and is allowed to do things which you are not allowed to do, does, to our shame, attract you to him. I put these things boldly, and draw the lines rather broadly. You get to be friends with him ; when you are friends you almost forget how much you like the sunshiny nature of his life ; you mix it up with the view of his character. You allow him, even if he is in other respects inferior to you, to be upon a footing with you, which ought not to be earned except by merit and real sympathy. It is understood that his "inferiors" will be more deferential to him, that they will take care of his comforts when they will let others care for their own. All this comes in so quietly, so insidiously, that even to evince the least fretfulness under it is held to be an unfavourable symptom in a schoolfellow's character. Happier certainly is he who, left to his devices, finds out his own powers, without experiencing any pangs ; for he is walking on the

sound ground of simplicity and energy, while the boy who makes a foolish use of his money, and those who admire him, have already their foot on the edge of the pitfall.

But the strangest thing is that the boy who has too much to spend is admired for his *generosity*—his generosity, when, if what he gives were measured by his means, it would be found to be, in proportion to what a poorer schoolfellow gives out of his narrow means, nothing but an ostentatious niggardliness. Do you remember how Isaiah says that the good time to come will have no clearer mark than this—that the churl will not be said to be bountiful? Do you remember how our Lord said that the widow's half-farthing was worth more to the eye of good sense and truth than all the gold of the Rich Givers?

And now let me guard myself from misconception. There are quite as many wise and good people among the rich as among those of the middle class. There are numbers beyond counting who know that their riches are a trust from God, and use them so: many who humble themselves in God's sight, and only beg Him to teach them to use their riches rightly; many who know the poisonous effect which their wealth *might* have on others, and who take all possible pains to be free of the misery of allowing this to be produced by any folly or ostentation of theirs. Do not think that the rich must needs be blinder than we are; only remember that they are in danger of it in our age and country, and resolve that both in the use of money and in the views you take of the riches of others, you do not allow yourselves to take such false views as we may see taken on all sides, but remember Christ's warning, and be neither blind guides nor blind-guided.

The second point—and this is one in which you are less wise than your elders, and less wise than you will be—is in the false opinion you have of the comparative value of bodily prowess and skill. Let it by all means be cultivated. The more you cultivate all powers the fuller will be your being. But do not take so false a view of the comparative value of them. The perishable body and the immortal mind are things of infinitely different value; to sacrifice

mental gifts and cultivated, widely-expanded intellect to bodily exercise is a spending of the glorious years of boyhood, bitterly to be rued in after life. The world does not make this mistake. It gives its money and its smiles and its applause to those who amuse it, but it does not make them its examples or its influential men. Do what you will you can never equal those whose profession or whose trade lie in the development of strength or swiftness ; and if honour is to be paid to these things, it cannot be fully paid to those who are but second in the rank. You can obtain nothing but this—that, considering your position and considering your other duties, you have reached a high mark. But what has happened meantime to your position and your duties ? Will you take a higher place than your father left you ? Have you done all those greater duties to perfection ? Have you gained in thought, in wisdom, in influence ? Alas ! no. Yet all your days at school you were by those passing things gaining an influence which you did not, turn to any purpose whatsoever, and those who praised you and watched you with admiring eyes are no better than if they had never known you.

Compare one who takes his own soul in his hand, and says to it, “I will discipline you and make you strong, and teach you not to think base thoughts, but to love what is beautiful and noble ; and I will make you do your duties to others, and help them out of their difficulties and out of their sins ; and if they will not forsake their sins, I will make you set yourself against them, whether you like it or no, and you *shall* try to do them good.” Take one, I say, who talks thus to his own soul, and take another boy who does not speak to his soul at all, but who says to his body, “I prefer you ; and I will feed you with what you like, and I will exercise you till you are very strong, and can run and leap and fight better than others, and you shall be made healthy and stout, and you shall not be troubled by anybody’s cares or anybody’s sorrows, or any work which makes head or heart ache, and you shall only be good enough not to vex those who are not good, or to interfere with your own comfort.”



Take, I say, such two boys talking thus to their souls and to their bodies, *practically*, though not in words; *and*, though the world judges right enough here, I say it with shame, and I say it with trembling, the one boy will go away and be forgotten of you, and the other will be popular among you, and you will keep his image among the treasures of your hearts, and all your life long you will say, "What a nice fellow he was!"

That is being Blind and taking to Blind Guides.

Well, now, I will take a third case, and that is the blindness of False Honour and False Chivalry. To hold to a bad promise; to become false for another in order to turn aside the law of discipline, which alone has in it virtue to heal or to warn; to be recognised as obedient amid secret disobedience; to be a destroyer of time and its uses; to be too good-natured to tell a friend some plain truth about his friends or his ways; to be excessively resentful at the least affront, these are the deceptive wares which lie about among you ticketed with the names of friendship, kindness, and honour.

They were blind men who ticketed them so, years ago, and they are blind men who are still imposed on by them.

But this world is not made for the lasting convenience of the good-natured. It is not made for the lasting advantage of those who wish to get its good things by stealth, or by acting a part, or by enacting laws to suit themselves. It was constructed on a different principle. This world was not made even for those who are naturally deficient—not made for the blind. The blind suffer in it, and must suffer. It is not made for the comfort of the ignorant. It is constructed on a different principle again from that. It is not made for the conceited, who say, "we see."

All these, the good-natured, the blind, the ignorant, the conceited, will at last find themselves badly off in it, and for this reason, that they have no right to be any of the things they are.

There is plenty of help for them everywhere. There is plenty of truth, light, knowledge, humility, to be had by those who will set out to obtain them when they are

young. Every one is sorry for the blind ; every good person is ready to be eyes to them ; even the intelligence of the lower creatures seems to comprehend the helpless movements of the blind. No temptation on earth will induce the little creature who is constituted the blind man's guardian, be it an infant, be it even a dog, to forsake him. It is their pride and joy to lead them ; and be the mental blindness what it may, you will everywhere find those who can see, not merely who profess to see, ready to take your part

For, indeed, to you who can see, what duty can be more urgent ? Is there not a touching need in the countenance of the blind which claims your freest sympathy, and pleads with eloquence for your outstretched hand ?

This is the way to escape the pitfalls of the world, if those who know they are blind would but go to where they can find guidance, if those who have been healed into seeing would but be the leaders they are qualified to be.

Let us not, beloved, let us not forget on these days of Rogation and Supplication for all blessings to the Father, to pray that He who made Light as the "offspring of heaven, first-born," would give us Light—Light to *all* who are in any darkness—Light that there may be among us no blind leaders of the blind, but only those who may be led and lead ever nearer and nearer to the Unquenched Fount.

## SERMON XI.

### PETTY INSIGHT.<sup>4</sup>

1 SAM. xvi. 7.

*“The Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature ; because I have refused him : for the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”*

THE old king of Israel, for all his glorious qualities, had proved himself unfit for his high trust. By constant wilfulness, by ill-temper unchecked and indulged toward everything or person that crossed his path, he had made folly deepen into sin, and cruelty into hatred of good. The generous heart that had forgiven so freely the “men of Belial” that rebelled against him, forgave no more. The impatience which took upon itself the Priest’s office for convenience sake, had broken down at last all sense of sacredness, and counted for holy neither sanctuary, nor commandment, nor the life of the innocent.

And sin and fretting had done their work at last, even upon his intellect, and the genius which had won so many a field against fearful odds, was deserting him, and he was bitterly conscious of it ; and the time was fast coming when, instead of looking upon the heathen army as food for his sword and for his bow, he would feel paralysed before them, and know but one weary thought—“I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me ;” when profanity would receive its just and only reward in the utter silence of the voice of God in his ear or in his heart :

and whereas not long before the very Spirit of God had dwelt with him, there would be the grievous confession, "God is departed from me, and answereth me no more."

It wants now thirteen years to that bitter end ; so long God bears with us. And now, in order that when that day comes there may not be wanting one to sit upon the Israelitish throne, God sends the prophet Samuel down to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse—he knows not which ; that is to be revealed at the moment. Vividly is the picture painted : the awe with which the villagers receive the prophet, now, it would seem, a full century old ; the visit to Jesse's house, the sacrifice, the assembling of the family, their passing one by one before the seer.

At the sight of the eldest son he makes no doubt that this is the chosen king : his heroic stature, like that of Saul himself, and the nobleness of his expression command his admiration. "Surely," he says, "the Anointed one stands before the Lord." This is the king in the presence of his God. Then is heard in the silence of his soul the warning of the text to Samuel. He has judged wrong. He has judged by what he saw, by the outside. A deeper penetration than this is needed. There is something within which makes Eliab unfit for the office. There is a disqualification in his character of which Samuel knew nothing, of which perhaps even father and brothers were not aware.

Then brother after brother, seven sons, are reviewed each in turn. Samuel forms no further judgment of his own : no whisper of the inner spirit marks any of them, and Samuel perhaps marvels at what could be the meaning of his own mission, until on asking whether this is really all the house he learns that the youngest is absent—one of whom no one had thought ; whom no one had conceived, boy as he was, to be fixed in character, in purpose, in will ; whose vehement courage and store of patience had not been realised ; of whose loyalty and faith none had perceived the measure to be such that he was the one and only man in all Israel meet for an office so burdensome and glorious.

The youngest was David; he is sent for; out of reverence to that future king of Israel, Samuel suspends the sacrificial feast till he is come; and when he comes Samuel hears at last the voice within: "Arise, anoint him, for this is he;" and Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.

We have lingered over this fair story, partly for its own sake, but more still from the deep lesson that underlies it. There was in David, as in all other sons of men, matter of sin, of grief, of repentance, of humiliation, of shame. But can we say what was the fault that he was free from? Does holy Scripture give us any clue to what Eliab's fault was? Had either David freedom from some cankering fault, or had Eliab's fault any relation to the fault which had been the ruin of Saul? I think we may venture upon reflection to answer all these questions.

The free, ingenuous, loyal temper of David has no doubt struck every one of us; that temper which he himself calls in one of his Psalms "the princely spirit."

He had in the next thirteen years endless provocations from Saul; yet you never find him behaving to him except in the most respectful, dutiful, affectionate way. Saul's bursts of passion, his unjust and monstrous language about his follower, even his attempts upon his life were frequent. But David is always ready to come back, and be as good to him as ever. He knew he was to succeed him on the throne, and more than once, when Saul was at open war with him, he was thrown in David's way by God's providence under such circumstances that it might have seemed as if God's own time were come. But David never wavered in loyalty. Now Saul's character was just the opposite; it was fretful jealousy, commonplace envy of excellence which he could not rival, begrudgment of the popular appreciation of that excellence, and even of God's own blessing upon it, that inspired and stimulated his other worst passions, until they ended in a kind of half-madness. Who can express the hateful wretchedness of even the beginnings of that state of mind? If you ever did any single

thing that you knew to be wrong, because you disliked any person living ; if you ever did a thing right in itself which you would not have done unless dislike of some one had suggested it to you ; or, if what is more common than either, you have persuaded yourself that some injustice was partly fair, and partly indifferent, because you had first of all deluded yourself into believing that the suggestion to cause pain, or to withhold a good, to debar a benefit, or to cut down an honour, or to stint a reward, was justifiable because you had real grounds for your bad opinion of the person, and because the opportunity of doing the wrong was not your own seeking, do you know what you did ? You lit up a low, slowly-eating fire upon your own heart ; not a wild, raging fire that may burn itself out, that cannot take hold of its intended fuel because the wind beats too strong upon it ; for, bad as bursts of anger are, they sometimes cure themselves, extinguish themselves, by their own fury and the intense shame they produce in a generous spirit. But when we kindle up the lurid smouldering fire of envy, we shield it too carefully to let it be put out thus. We begin for ourselves what Saul began and finished for himself, slowly it stole on, till all that was grand in him and noble and beautiful was consumed ; and he was left with but a passion-charred relic of the new heart which God had given him when He made him king.

It is singular how the figures group themselves round this single point, when we try to picture this event of David's anointing.

Look at Samuel himself. His fault and mistake (if fault it was) seem to be just of the opposite kind. He is in contrast ; his error is thinking too well of what is attractive. When all was so pleasant to look on, and when the manner suited doubtless the aspect, he concluded hastily that the attractiveness sprang from the principles within. And so it did from the original nature of the man ; but if we indulge our bosom fault, it will overrun all our principles. Unattractiveness of character is often due to the absorbing power of single faults. We indeed

are too apt to consider unattractive only what affects our comfort—conceit or sharpness of temper or sullenness, or disregard of others' convenience, this is the kind of fault which we punish most in our society. This is the kind of fault (though there are others very, very far worse) which we can see with our own eyes spoiling a person and making him unpleasant; and it is the removal of, or even the attempt to remove, such awkward and disagreeable faults from ourselves which makes people like us.

But the latent faults of character, which are in reality so much more serious than these social faults, work on our characters in the same way no fault can stand alone. Our minds are not divided into departments. There are no separate organs, as it were, one of which may be diseased, while all the rest are healthy; one fault of character, I do not say existing, but unchecked, without the application to it of any remedial process, is an infection. It is a disease of the soul which may now be breaking out in one direction, and now showing itself in one symptom, but which is in fact a radical disorder of the whole.

Now Eliab seems to have become a great man afterwards. We read of him as the prince of the tribe of Judah, and of his daughter or his granddaughter as the queen of Rehoboam. But though the eldest son of the house and of the tribe, there was wanting in him the especial spirit of David; he showed, though in less degree, the fault of Saul, and whereas it might have been to the last something to him that the great prophet had judged so highly of his capabilities; that he had overlooked the secret fault which God knew; that he had thought of him with such charity and respect, the very next thing that we find Eliab doing is exhibiting the contrary character from Samuel's and David's, and saying and doing exactly what Saul might have said and done. It is an instance of envy, of harsh, uncharitable judgment

David, now the Anointed of the Lord, the chosen king, the secret hope of Israel, is not for all that treated differently, nor does he even wish to be so. He is still the youngest of the family, still the servant and messenger of

his elder brothers. They go to the army with the king, and he is sent to carry food to them, to inquire after their health ; he is to bring back their token that he has done his duty properly : " Look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge."

He is witness to an event which he never expected to see ; the proposal of the enemy to decide the fortune of the fight and of the nations at the cost of one life only, to be hazarded against the gigantic champion of the heathen. Already it is in his heart to offer his own life, the youngest, the least noticed in all that host, to the challenge ; the life on which God Himself had set His seal ; and to offer it in perfect faith, putting it in the hand of his Lord, when Eliab, utterly misunderstanding the case, caring nothing to know the rights of it, heedless of justice, or of feeling, regards nothing but the stinging jealousy in his own heart ; forgets that the boy was sent by his father, sent for *his* good, and sent at a risk ; and though the boy had said nothing to betray his purpose, much more to inculcate himself, says, as he watches the bright and beautiful countenance, on which even the historian dwells with pleasure, and hears his eager question about the Philistines, says with anger kindled against David, " Why camest thou down hither ? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness ? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thine heart, for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

Mark David's gentle reply. " What have I now done ? Is there not a cause ?" Literally, Is there not *word* ?—that is : " Was not I told to come ? Have I not simply obeyed my father's order ?"

But mark Eliab's penetration, as he thought it. How like it is to the way in which we speak of and to each other ; and mark how it is no mere breach of gentle courtesy, but the frothing up of a very evil spirit within.

How prone to ascribe our neighbour's act to self-seeking and self-conceit and self-indulgence, while for those things which in ourselves are really due to such causes, we find excuses, justifications, easy assertions. So we deceive



*ourselves, so we disparage others, kind when we should be stern, harsh when we should be loving ; and so it comes to pass, that we grow up unfit for the great and good things to which God would otherwise call us ; and crowns of grace and crowns of blessing and crowns of heavenly strength, worth to us far more than the poor golden circlet of Judah, come every day near to our heads, and are borne away again and given to our neighbours that "are better than we are."*

Be David's generous humility our pattern : and with him place side by side, as one who translated into living words the tone which to-day we have tried to catch, one whom we commemorated a few days back, as the "greatest born of woman."

The spirit of John Baptist is the true spirit of the Christian ; that spirit in which he stood and thought nothing of his own eminence or influence, but only of the holiness and perfection of Him who was his young kinsman, according to the flesh, and said, "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice. This, my joy, therefore, is fulfilled."

So let us know that there are pleasures greater than triumphs, clearer insight than worldly penetration ; let us rejoice over each others' good, and discern each others' goodness, because "charity envieth not, seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil."

## SERMON XII.

### VIRTUE "OF COURSE."

1 PET. iii. 15.

*"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."*

It is a well-known saying of a great man, not commonly remarkable for the patience of his words towards those who differed from him, when, as he thought, they could not or would not see the truths which were to him so plain, that if ever he found himself in contact with any one, old or young, who with the most limited ability, the narrowest intellect, was doing the very best he could, steadily, and humbly, to understand and overcome the difficulties which presented themselves to him in his daily work—"to such an one," said he, "I would stand hat in hand."

Yes, there can scarcely be any person more worthy of our reverence than he who from a sense of duty gives his whole power and energy to tread his daily path, and overcome his besetting difficulties with his whole soul. There is nothing more within the reach of every one; there is nothing more elevating, nothing more spiritual and Christlike; and yet how few honestly deserve this homage of noble hearts for what is at once so simple and so lofty.

When we are very young, we are many of us in the habit of thinking that all we hear about virtue, about goodness, about truth, or kindness, or industry, is quite true, indeed, and very right, but commonplace and dull and not very difficult. This mistaken idea—for mistaken it is—arises partly from the fact of our being very inexperienced and

comparatively well defended from temptations. Our time is watchfully arranged, so that we are not able to be altogether idle ; it is very pleasant to give and to receive kindness ; and if ever we have offended against truth we perceive a little time after that the temptation was small after all, and we are soon ashamed to look back on it.

But another reason why, when we are young, we think much that is said to us about virtue and vice commonplace, is the great happiness that we have in our homes. There it is fully believed, there it is always acted upon, there it is like the common sunshine and air which all enjoy—this sense that goodness is good and vice of every kind evil. There we see little of the fact that the world, the flesh, and the devil war against every human soul. We have about us many who may be said to have conquered, so far as it can be said of any in this life, those fearful enemies. And so from our childhood we have lived in an atmosphere of peace ; it is assumed that we and all others are to try to be pure and true and good ; and so we get to think this a commonplace ; a mere background for the rest of life, and we are for a while more excited about new things, bright things, striking things ; forgetting that things new, bright, and striking, are very unlikely to be the greatest things.

After a while, after the road of life has been up hill for a little time—after the heat and burden of it have begun to be felt, after we have had some of those encounters which are so vividly and truthfully described in the great scriptural allegory of the "Pilgrim's Progress," the veil begins to grow thinner that is before our eyes ; the mists rise, the forms of things which had seemed great are seen in their truth ; they are but little mounds, low and almost insignificant, close to the road ; we had thought them great because they were magnified by our ignorance of the world. And true it is that the things which we have always heard about, but never really seen, never really attempted perhaps to see, rise towering above us and far from us, mountains which must be crossed ere we can reach the promised land ; mighty primeval forms clothed in purest snow and finest air,

—Virtue, Truth, Goodness, Faith. At last we see their grandeur. At last we mark their splendour. There they rise, familiar names, hitherto unrealised realities. At once it becomes evident that we must reach those summits; at once we see that it will, after all, be very difficult; at once we see that any difficulty and any danger is worth encountering for the sake of reaching those mountain thrones.

Now yesterday and to-day<sup>1</sup> in all the passages of Scripture read in the two Communion Services, we have been following the history of one of the very greatest and best of men; a man who, without intending it, has, like Cæsar, left his name to an even prouder and more widely potent race of monarchs than have gloried to assume Cæsar's name. What has been the influence of the greatest Kaisers or the greatest Czars compared with the influences of those monarchs who have assumed as their proudest name that they were the successors of Peter; and who, to maintain it, hold to a doubtful legend as if it were a revealed Truth? Yet even such monumental and perennial glory as this is a very dim honour compared with the multitude of wandering souls whom his preaching reclaimed; the multitudes of every generation who have believed in Christ through the tradition which he set moving;—compared with the strength and comfort which his example and words have given to believers in all ages;—compared with the multitudes who have been nerved by Peter's Repentance to lead Peter's new life in the strength of Peter's Faith.

We read yesterday how he was the First Man who, by the grace of God, grasped the truth that Jesus is the Son of God: we heard the blessing that on his Rock-like declaration of the Truth the Church should be built immovable.

We read too how he was restored to that Church in the very hour of death by an unearthly deliverance. We read this morning how Christ awoke him to a sense of the wonders and immediateness of God's providence by the exhibition of a strange miracle, and how that caused him

<sup>1</sup> St. Peter's Day and Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

such a shock, that his first impulse was to beg Christ to show him such things no more, but to depart and leave him. And again in the Epistle we read the calm, quiet words with which, when a very old man, he addressed his converts; the summing-up of the wisdom which he had gained in so long, so marked, so various a life, a life full of excitements, full of labours, full of travels in various parts of the world, a life which he knew would end in a violent death.

Now I want you to notice three things in this life of his :—

1. Think how to him the way of duty seemed both simple and easy when he entered on it as a young disciple.

2. Think how terribly he was undeceived.

3. What was the summing up of life which he gave when he was old? What were the things which he now saw with a penetrating glance as the things which beginners should learn and use at once?

How easy life seemed to Peter at beginning. It was he who told Christ that it could be by no means necessary for Him to go through suffering and death. "This shall not be unto Thee." It was he who cast himself into the sea to walk upon it in the power of his untried faith. It was he who said, "Let us build three tabernacles, and always stay on the heights with Moses, Elias, Christ." It was he who said, "I will not deny Thee in any wise."

So plain and easy it seemed to him to walk onward confidently in the way of duty: Virtue was "of course" right. Faithfulness was "of course" to be shown to his Master. The power of faith was "of course" to be exerted when we were in difficulty. "Of course" we shall always keep ourselves in the presence of Christ, so that we may not sin.

It is necessary, alas! for us to observe that this confident trusting to our knowledge, our principles, our courage, our sense of honour, as things which "of course" every right-minded person will do, is quite and absolutely certain to fail us, and to go on failing us so long as we do not know that as human beings we have absolutely *no* strength of our own; that it is only God who upholds us, and that if we

are not trusting in Him, praying to Him day by day—I ought rather to say, *hour after hour*—for grace and strength, we are not progressing, and are at any moment liable to sudden temptations and shameful falls.

For, remember how every single confidence of St. Peter's turned out. When he presumptuously encouraged his Lord to expect an easier way to convert the world than by suffering and dying, Christ addressed to him the most awful reproof that He ever uttered.

When he proved his faith by treading the boisterous sea, he was all but lost: a monument of self-confidence.

When he thought nothing easier and more delightful than always to dwell with Christ in the retired solitude, he came down among the crowd and found himself unable to expel the evil spirit of a child, solely, as Christ told him, because he had no faith.

When he was quite confident that he would rather die than deny Christ, one night had not passed before he three times declared that he had no acquaintance with Him.

This was the painful experience of a noble-minded, self-denying, energetic, warm-hearted, *but* self-confident man. Can we have a more crucial instance? Can we have a more living flesh-and-blood example that of all the characters which achieve real success self-confidence is the bane, the first thing which must be got rid of?

The lesson which this great Saint's life and character reads is the lesson written more or less plainly on all greatness. You may think of the most diverse characters of greatness, with goodness or without it; of a Napoleon studying past midnight studies which no one in Europe was so familiar with as he; of a Wellington revealing the shrinking with which he entered every victorious battle; of a great orator whom I will not name, nervous and agitated, until the very moment when the fire seemed to break forth in him as he rose; of a Luther declaring that when he entered the pulpit, which shook the world, he could wish that he might hide himself for ever; of a Demosthenes giving years to cure a defect; of a Cicero taking lessons in speaking when he

was past forty years of age. It seems as if every really great man rose to his greatness through an absolute lack of confidence in the one point in which success was assured to him.

But, great as is this lesson, if we would learn it, one and all of us, it is not *the* lesson which I most wish to enforce on myself and you to-day.

Take and read over again this afternoon the Epistle which we have just read, and ask yourselves this question: "What was the lesson of life to St. Peter?" What is it which, after such tremendous experiences, after such conflicts and trials in himself, after living many years with the incarnate Son of God, after many years of preaching His faith in so many countries, to so many classes of society, and winning over so many forms of thought, so many habits of life to the obedience of the Cross,—what is it which after all he recommends to all men as the main thing?

It is the simplest possible lessons of kindness, and of purity of speech, and of goodness. Simplest, I say (not *easiest* to carry out; for how hard *he* found them), but simplest to understand.

Yes! what we in our ignorance and our self-confidence think of as a *matter of course*, and go off in search of something harder to grapple than all this, and pleasanter to dwell upon than all this,—getting on in the world, winning distinctions, making progress by cleverness not by worth, being thought strong and active, and a bright companion—of all these, he, having had such experience as few men ever had, gives us quite contrary views. "All the things we are too apt to think most of, all these are really "the matters of course" which you cannot keep out of if you would. The world will hold you to *them*. But the things which are really grand, which are really difficult—these, according to the wise, aged, experienced Saint, are just those things which your fathers and mothers have talked to you about ever since you could remember.

Listen to him. "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion," *i.e.* sympathy, "one with another: Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil;"—not

feeling it a point of honour to be even with those who injure or slight us,—nor "railing for railing,"—not ambitious of being dreaded critics—"knowing that ye are hereunto called that ye should inherit a blessing."

Yes, a blessing is before you to inherit. Will you not bring yourself up—as a young heir is brought up to be worthy to enter upon his property—with great ideas about the use of it?

But mark how he goes on. He just takes an old text from the Bible and repeats it to us; one of those smooth, calm, sweet verses from the Psalms which you say here day by day, and which will come back to some of you, who will forget them alas! meantime, on your death-beds, and which will be to others so inexhaustible a treasure; he takes one of these, and says it over to us, "He that will love life and see good days"—he that longs for a really happy life, really prosperous, really bright,—what is he to do to attain it? "Let him refrain his *tongue* from evil, and his *lips* that they speak no guile."

Ah! if there be some almost child among us, who (in the littleness and weakness which might be so beautiful and so good) thinks an evil word a manly word, what is to be done?

If you were brought up alone, it would not make your hearts better, and lips without hearts are nothing worth. If you were watched day and night, instead of leaving you, like manly English boys, much to yourselves, it would only add slavishness and underhandedness to other evils. If any elders have ever set you wrong in this, theirs indeed is a case of which our heart speaks in shuddering throbs. But that does not make yours the better. Listen to the manliness of the old man's speech: take the advice of one that had seen Christ and denied Him, and been restored to Him, and who knew what life was. He said that there had no difference taken place in the world between the time of David and himself. As it was in David's days, so it is now, says he. "If you love life, and if you would see good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips that they speak no guile."



"For"—mark this *for*; it is a *reason* indeed. *For* "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

You understand that. Keep your lips pure, or else it is of no use praying. If you put lowering and enfeebling words upon your lips, then the sweetest, mightiest of all words will have no power to help you.

It seems here right to speak of one special topic in this Epistle, and I again beg of you all to read it and think it over more. Its last counsel is to us all:—

1. He says, "Be kind." 2. He says, "Use pure language." 3. He says, "Fear not." Do not fear persecution; it is much less likely to come than you suppose; and if it does come it will not hurt you so as to matter. "Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? But and *if* ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

And now comes the sum of the whole; the secret spell which will give the self-command and the power. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

As some carry the cross on their breasts, and consecrate their bodies by the sign, so do you make a Heart-chapel into which none but yourself can look. Offer there your own worship unseen.

## SERMON XIII.

### IT WILL LAST MY TIME.

JEREM. v. 31.

*“ My people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof ? ”*

THE Prophet Jeremiah was one who in a peaceful and prosperous time foresaw the approach of great evils and great ruin. He lived to see the evil. There were many who accused him of bringing on the evil which he foretold. But that was something far beyond the power of any man. The evil was the complete disruption of the political and social bonds of his country. Those who imagined that this part or that part of the mischief was due to what he had said upon the subject, saw, of course, but a very little part of the whole question.

His it was, when all things seemed safe and quiet, to say distinctly that there was such a prevalence of utterly false opinion, such misconceptions of what the moral principles were on which society rested, such a confidence in the continuance of a state of things which had done well enough till then, such a belief that there must always be rich people taking care of themselves, and poor people getting on as they could ; and that it was no man's part to interfere with the rich, or to take the part of the poor,—that the very quiet which was enjoyed under the present state of things was the very worst symptom of all.

The organisation of the kingdom of Judah, moral and social, was very complete. The throne was surrounded by a powerful educated class, chiefly the priests, who, though

their title was the same, were as different as possible in every conceivable way from modern clergy. They were the civil magistrates, and they were, to a very great extent, the military officers of the country. Their sacerdotal functions lasted but a very short time in every year, and while these required their residence for that time close to the temple, their duties were very formal.

Next to them stood another order—the order of the Prophets. It was they who exercised a moral influence in towns, in villages, in country places, in families, and who spoke in the name of the Lord. There were many of these who are denounced by Jeremiah as profligate pretenders, who gave oracular answers to those who consulted them as to all manner of public and private affairs; and whereas in former times the priests and the prophets had had great variances and opposed interests, now in the settled state of the country the interests of the two orders very much coincided; they played into each other's hand, and while food and raiment were procured by large classes with tolerable ease, as wants were few, and the richer classes were very numerous and important, there was very little heard of the multitude of miserable lives and ignorant souls of whose condition Jeremiah speaks here and there with startling horror. They were well kept under, and, on the whole, the country was peaceable and content under the government of the good Josiah. "The prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bore rule by their means, and the people loved to have it so,"—were satisfied that things were well managed, and there remained only one question besides, which Jeremiah asks in a simple way; which no doubt would seem to many to mean just nothing, and not to require an answer. This simple question was: "And what will ye do in the end thereof?"

As I said, many would think the question was quite a random one, and would come to nothing.

"The End thereof"—they would say; "what does the prophet mean? there is no special end thereof; why should there be any? The present settled condition of things *is* the end of all our earlier wars and troubles and revolutions.

There is no danger within or without ; society has never had such means at command of tranquillity or enjoyment." We have an awful picture of the godless worldliness of Jerusalem in the earlier chapters ; few though the touches are, we know what they mean ; the state of later capitals of the world under such circumstances illustrates the history perfectly.

And all this was going on immediately before the Egyptian invasion, immediately before the Babylonian invasion, immediately before that "judgment of the poor," and that overthrow of superstition and unbelief and luxury, which for a century past and more God had been saying He would certainly bring to pass.

"My people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof?" *i.e.* in more modern phrase : 1. People decline to look facts in the face. 2. No state of things exists anywhere but that it has its results as well as its causes.

1. My people love to have it so ; they take things as they come. They are content with what they have just now, and do not consider how it is produced ; whether all is right, or whether wrong elements enter into their peace.

2. "What will ye do in the end thereof?" There *are* undeniably wrong things existing without an attempt to remedy them, and evil results—results which even *you* will own to be evil—evils which for all your blindness will come home to you—are as certain to follow as that corn springs from seed.

What Jeremiah wants his people to do then is to try to see things as they are ; to understand what is going on about them, and to foresee the results for which they will be held responsible before God and man.

Now, from this point I might turn at once to the affairs of each individual soul among us, and ask, as you are Christian boys, whether there is not a great deal of this kind of self-deception in our small society here ? whether there is not a great deal of general agreement to make things smooth ? to persuade ourselves that all is right, to feel a good deal of anxiety to be quite up to the usual lead

of opinion, and judgments of various points among us—but nothing more.

I fully believe that there are many who put before them in many points a higher standard ; who wish to make the Law of God their own law, to keep themselves from evil, and their consciences, so far as sin and holiness are concerned, pure and healthful. And I see symptoms too of there being a feeling that on some general questions perhaps the tone of society is not as high as it should be ; a sense that honour without profit is a loftier thing than profit without honour, or even than honour with profit ; and such symptoms of rising standards are, of course, to be accepted with thankfulness. But is there not yet about a large number of things a mere conventionality, which is as formal, as artificial, as worldly, as contemptible as the artificial standard of the world itself ? Is there not a drawing of a line so fine between what is permissible and what is not permissible, between what is actually profane and what just escapes being profane, between what is laughable and what is just too bad to be laughed at, a line so fine, I say, between such borders that it is very far from being a broad visible demarcation of good and not good.

And when we examine ourselves, should we not find out whether, if (as our prophet says) we were less content than we are with the conglomerate opinion of boys of all kinds of training, of all kinds of abilities or of dulness, of all degrees of appreciativeness or want of power to appreciate delicate shades of moral colour—whether, if we were less content to recognise this random mixture of ideas as the rule, one might not, for Christ's own sake, do something more to lift up ourselves and lift up our friends to Him as the only Author in the world—first, of the righteous judgments of men's minds ; and secondly, of the holy advices of the Bible.

But I wish, before saying all I have to say to you on this point, to ask you to stand with me on a point something like that which Jeremiah took, and to look not on ourselves only, but upon our country ; and as we look to grow up men, and take our place in the world as men, to look

forward to what we shall then do, and how take that part.

You may read and know if you will that as our country advances, as we say, in wealth and the products of wealth, there is something else which is increasing too, and a very strange spectre it is to be growing as it does grow under such circumstances; a very boding figure to occupy an increasing space in the foreground of the gorgeous picture of England's prosperity which some people draw for themselves; and that spectre is Poverty.

Yes, while tract after tract of land is more and more won to beauty and to enjoyment, and while you may see in your own homes the daily increase of luxurious habits, we all know that Poverty and Pauperism are increasing too. We hear lamentations on the growth of democratical spirit; but if it grows it does not bring classes nearer together, but separates them more and more widely.

Well, can we think on this, and not know that there is the further question to be asked, "What will ye do in the end thereof?" When this bears fruit, as of course it will, how shall we do then? If the end is evil then the thing is evil, as of course we see, and there is an evil cause for it all. And whatever may be the various ways in which the economist or politician might describe the working of the phenomena, the evil cause lies farthest back of course, in our feelings on the subject and in the thoughts of our hearts; and the selfishness of classes which have the history of the country for the present in their own hands is of course the real root of it all. I am not going to say *how* selfishness is showing itself, for we are all capable of seeing that if we choose; and no good would be done by rendering this or that outlet of selfishness impossible; the change must be within, and if any one will say how that inner change in the rich and upper classes—that is in ourselves—can be wrought except by our learning, preaching, practising the Gospel of the Poor, he will be a wise man.

I know not that there have ever been in the world any principles save those of Christ which strike at Selfishness, as the root of all the evil in society. And selfishness is a

thing that can only be cured from within. No rules can put a stop to it, and unselfishness must be learnt as everything else has to be learnt, by practising ; by beginning on a small scale, by going on to more difficult exercises. And the Grammar of Unselfishness is Self-Discipline and Self-Denial on a small scale. Any religion or religious sect which tells you not to trouble yourself about self-denial as a real discipline, is an instrument of self-deception. It will not promote unselfishness ; it will not, in the end have any good or large effect upon society ; and if churches become leavened into a general feeling that there is no special work for them in this direction ; that it is not their business to teach Self-Discipline to each subject of their influence, the work of that Church is nearly over, or at any rate it must make a new beginning.

We have no right to undertake to educate you boys, and leave it before you as a matter of indifference whether your whole existence is a selfish one or not. Even in school-work it is mere selfishness if you have no object but to rise, no object but ambition without a thought of duty to God or man ; and in hours that are all your own is Selfishness the ruling principle still ? If it has been so for ages past in school, then what wonder that while "Society," as it is called, hangs like a gorgeous curtain of scarlet and gold before us, our eyes, as they rest on it, see of themselves, without our effort or our will, its patterns running into all manner of spectral combinations and fanciful symbols of misery, and disease, and sin.

Some look at the sad history of this age, and say its forms, its comforts, will last our time. No ! coward soul ; if you take no heed to those that are to come after you, they will not even last your time. Your time will never be over. Our time will outlast all history, and we shall be judged.

If we want one instance of what is true of all our cities, and of all our fields, take this. There are some of you who look forward to commanding bodies of men, neither in cities, nor in fields—men gathered together, clothed and fed, and organised, but you even already must have heard

what they who know them best say of the moral and intellectual condition of those on whose hearts and lives we rely as the last defence ; and you have heard too how much depends on the character of the officers of a regiment, as to what their men are. How much of moral and religious influence can be, and is sometimes brought to bear, and with what effect ; and you have heard too, perhaps, how much one indifferent man can do to counteract the good results of the unselfishness of others.

I have heard of boys who dare not, they say, be clergymen because of the responsibility—but dare be officers. Is that because there is no responsibility resting on them for the state of those who look up to them every hour of every day ? alas ! the delusion.

But this is but one single instance—a marked one, no doubt, but only one. The manufacturer among his men, the tradesman and the lawyer among his clerks, the master among his scholars, the senior among students, the leading boys, the clever boys, the stronger boys, the boys of strong will, the boys of energy, each and all, are as responsible as the clergyman or the officer. And the first step in fulfilling responsibility is Unselfishness, and the last step is Unselfishness. .



## SERMON XIV.

### UNPROGRESSIVENESS.

1 KINGS x. 5—8.

*“ There was no more spirit in her ; and she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom ; howbeit I believed not the words until I came and mine eyes had seen it : and, behold, the half was not told to me : thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are the men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.”*

It would indeed be a matter of small interest among the great thoughts and awful feelings which ought to be aroused by the religious services of the Christian Church, that she should devote to the visit of a barbarian princess to an Israelite king the sacred moments of worship, as she does this day, unless that action brought clearly into view something that bears on the highest principle by which we live, something that may lift us not only above the old times there recorded, but above our own times and our own lives. St. Augustine did not hesitate to say that even the life of an Abraham, an Isaac, and a Jacob would not concern us unless Christ and Christ's ways were expressed in them. They might interest an antiquarian or an historian, but they would not demand the absorbed contemplation of the devout Christian.

And of this Arabian Queen the Christianity of her life is drawn out by no less than Christ Himself. The world and the Church together are foreshown by this Queen ; all to whom ever the word, sight, name of Christ comes within

ken, are warned by her example, while the king, whose wisdom awoke such a rapturous feeling in the half-instructed spirit, is a pale shadow of the wisdom which Christ among us is ever uttering. "The Queen of Sheba," He says, "shall rise up in judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them, for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here."

Yes! He carries us forward to the end of the world, to the great and terrible scenes which our eyes shall behold when, in the close of the ages, our feet shall once more stand upon this earth, and the men of every generation shall arise. On this side, the many who trod the broad and easy way of indifference, of doubtingness without investigation, of scepticism which would not exert itself, of heedlessness which would not be aroused; on the other side, all they who have valued aright the least rays of truth and knowledge, who have sacrificed all to seek and learn, who have removed mountains which stood in the way of their faith, or painfully climbed the hill Difficulty, whose precipices and lions still threaten every one who desires a purer air and clearer light. Among this beautiful rejoicing host there will be no figure of the old world more remarked than hers who from the uttermost parts of the world came to hear wisdom.

What, then, is the principle which makes this oriental visit of barbaric splendour worth a Christian study? It is this—that she recognised the existence of a higher wisdom than filled as yet her daily life, and that she was laborious.

There was nothing else to gain. Her own splendour, more ancient than David's, was at least equal to his. She gave indeed, as it seems, more than she received. And if the Rabbinical tradition is true that she brought with her the fragrant plants of balsam, and introduced their cultivation, which constituted for a thousand years after the main export of Palestine, and a source of wealth which moved the envy of Rome, she did indeed confer an enlightened favour upon the country.

But with her, wealth given and received was but a background, only a means of obtaining higher things. She owned and she sought out *Wisdom, Knowledge, Learning, Thought*, as something of a different order, and infinitely more precious. At home there was at least the power of appreciating all these, but in Palestine had suddenly arisen a prince, whose chief objects were organisation indeed, and art, but beyond these the study of Nature, the study of Human Life and the Human Mind, and the study of God's Law.

Plants, Proverbs, Music, Songs. Simple names, indeed, yet standing at the beginning of lines of knowledge which are dignified by greater names, and opening out before the eyes which were first lifted to them dreams and possibilities which were yet in the far distance. Already questions were asked which are not yet answered; already principles laid down which human life has not yet fulfilled. Only to hear a little of these teachings, only to have a glimpse of these beginnings, was worth, to her, time and risks and difficulties, which for us mean devotion and labour, but mean also continual encouragements and daily advances.

The contrast which Christ pointed is between those who seek wisdom, finding it difficult to obtain, and those who, while it falls in showers on them daily from Him, are dry still, and barren, and bear no fruit.

We do not always understand what a distinction there is between the progressive and thoughtful, and the careless, whose days from sunrise to sunset add nothing of wisdom to their hearts, or of knowledge to their minds. Christ draws the greatest distinction between the one class and the other—between the inattentive listener to His words and the attentive one with infinitely less advantages. Not only in our daily life are we heedless of this distinction, but perhaps when we are disposed to rely (as is so common) on the common sense of the multitude—meaning by that all the thoughtless, careless, uninstructed, low-lived masses of the great world (whether rich or poor makes no difference)—we are in reality leaning on a broken reed, one day destined to go into our hand and pierce it.

If, having power to do otherwise, we trust to the ignorant who do not wish for knowledge, to the imprudent who cannot manage their own affairs, the weak who do not even know the name of self-restraint, and would laugh at the idea of disciplinary self-denial—if we trust to them, I say, and seek their opinions on all the most important matters of government, and say, “Each one of you shall rank with the wisest, the most thoughtful, the loftiest-hearted man,” are we not doing that which must tend to keep the standard low, the principle feeble? There *is* a difference, and we ought to know it and take it into account, in our own lives and ways; there is a difference between the wilfully ignorant and the thoughtful, which renders those less good than these, less good as guides, as citizens, as friends, as brothers.

Who was more meek, who was more laborious, who was more humble than Polycarp the martyr, the friend of St. John? He was the most loving towards all souls, the least proud or arrogant; but what said he of the wilfully ignorant when the proconsul of Asia himself urged him to save his life by representing his case to the people? “Do but persuade the people,” he said. But Polycarp’s answer was, “To you I felt myself bound to give account, for our religion teaches us to pay due honour to powers ordained of God, but as for those I hold them to be unworthy of my defending myself before them.”

He will not work on the feelings of those who are unfit to judge of reason. They are not worthy. They have not sought wisdom; they do not care for it; they are no fit judges of whether a man ought to believe in Christ, or to obey Christ; even to save his life he will not address to them appeals, which might be successful in melting their passions, but would leave them no wiser, and, therefore, no better than before. “I hold them to be unworthy of my defending myself before them.”

And shall we then rule ourselves by the daily rules which govern the conduct of the ignorant and thoughtless? Shall we pay such constant deference to the will of the many? Shall we follow instead of leading? We shall

never raise them by pretending that as a body they possess the good sense of which, as units in that body, they are destitute; still less shall we raise ourselves.

Christians in the world, and thoughtful Christians among nominal ones, are like those very men whom the queen so envied. We stand about the throne of Christ. To us it is given daily to hear something of His wisdom, His unearthly wisdom. Daily we hear His voice in Scripture, and, if less clearly His, in conscience too. Daily it is given us to approach Him, to open a heart to Him; to tell Him of a fault, a difficulty, a trial; to go away strengthened to overcome or bear it.

"Happy are the men," she said to Solomon, "happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom."

How much greater the happiness that is ours, if we know it, and if we use it. Happy if we know and realise, not only the goodness, but the wisdom of the Bible; if we look for it; if we try to see what a *wise*\* guide it is in daily life. To how many very difficult questions, and how many very difficult positions, it affords a key. It was the *Wisdom* of Christ which first confounded His enemies. What examples we have in it of tact, of courage, of skill, of saying the right thing at the right moment. The Epistles of St. Paul all proceed on the idea that people in order to be good must be really trying to be as clever and as sensible, and as acute and intelligent, and as far-seeing and broad-viewed as they can, all the time that they are to be modest, and gentle, and affectionate. "Always to be ready with a reason for the faith that is in you," says St. Peter. "Let your speech be with grace seasoned with salt" (a well-known expression for soundness and sense), says St. Paul.

And here to-day above all in this Holy Communion we have confessedly that upon which all powers of mind and soul may be employed; all busy, all eager, all living under the shadow of the great mystery which transcends human intellect. You are bidden first to examine your own minds, your own lives, your own characters, in order to receive

the benefits. That is not an easy thing; that is an exercise by which you may steadily climb to great insight and experience and wisdom as years go on.

And then, that the benefits may be the more lively present to you, you must think of the Life and Words of Christ, and picture to yourselves the wonderful scenes and mysteries He went through for you; and of His present life in heaven you must think, and of His intercession for you, and the mystery of mysteries which He purposes to represent to us to-day, His continual sacrifice of Himself offered once for all in time, available for eternity, and of the mysteries through which He will lead you at the end of time, and the exaltation of glory in body, soul, and spirit, which He purposes to give you. Here is employment for thinking and for growing wise, and for straining after better understanding and more intelligent appreciation, and more powerful, self-controlling practice.

“Happy are His servants who stand continually before Him and hear His wisdom.”

There are lessons too for all, not only for those who are initiated into this Feast of God; but for the very youngest also, who can understand as well as any of us that, if it is God Himself and no other Who is in the depth of every yearning spirit, Who every moment wakes in us our conscience and reason,—that He must be the First of Teachers; that He alone gives intelligence and taste for work, and the love of what is beautiful; and that we have power to ask God for all these; and that he who asks will obtain.

And oh, you who communicate with us, who worship with us, for the last Sunday to-day, how earnestly would I have you give a few moments, before the day is done, to a review of the years that you have spent here.

Fewer of you than usual—singularly few—leave us from the advanced parts of the school, but all the more needful it is that you do what I ask.

It is good for you to do so. It is good also for us. How does a place of this kind grow and prosper but by the experience of its boys?—no other way.

What are the lessons you would fain leave behind you? Have you found that goodness and industry and self-discipline have their reward, and that this reward is beyond all distinctions? Then let no one deem that you think otherwise.

Would you recommend to your young brothers whom you leave behind you, to indulge evil thoughts, to seek profane conversation, or to be modest, pure, and true? Is idleness and self-indulgence the way to be happy?

Or are humble desires of doing duty and being good, hope and desire to attain to what God promises, sincere prayer in hours when prayer is natural,—are these things blessed? If you have found it so, and believe it is so, then let your Peace rest upon us.

## SERMON XV.

### ANIMATION.

Ecc. ix. 10.

*"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."*

THIS is one of the most popular and most easily acquiesced-in maxims of that Book of sad experiences called, from him who made it, Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher. This preacher was no Priest or Levite, or Doctor of the Law. He was a man of the world—a naturalist, a poet, and a prince. And in his old age he felt driven to be a preacher too : the Spirit of God, which has taken many men just as they were, and made their various tones and fashions of mind prophesy about Truth and Wisdom and Holiness—each according to his own different point of view—some even bad men like Balaam, some shepherds like Amos, some statesmen like Daniel, and so on—has in this case seized hold of a Man of the World, and pressed him so sore, saying, "And what have you to say as a Man of the World, who have drunk deep of its pleasures, and shone high in its honours? Tell the world what you have learnt in respect of Truth and Holiness and Wisdom, and how far they ought to enter into the composition of Society as elements." And his reply is wrung from his lips in much bitterness ; and it is—"Altogether and entirely they must be absorbed into the composition of society—society without morals is already a dead thing."

It is a very melancholy book, because the man had tried to live without holiness. Wordly wisdom was so very



wise, and worldly strength so very strong, that it had taken him in. He had really thought they were realities. He had really thought and believed that a man might go on without any religious feeling; he gives us scene after scene of grand human life in its skill and power and beauty; in its luxuriousness, in its commandingness—and, without religious feeling; nothing above, nothing beyond, to cloud or shadow the Feast or the City, the Study or the Home, the Council-chamber, the public Assembly, or the talk of proud Generals behind their fortifications. The descriptions resemble nothing so much, if I may venture to say so, as the frescoes on the walls of Pompeii, or the historic French paintings.

There is no check or hindrance in them. There is what some would call the fervours of human life; but what we call, taught by a higher spirit, taught even by this disappointed Ecclesiastes, the King-Preacher—what we call, I say, life's hollow mask and puppet play.

But—what tones of wisdom ring out every now and then as the fruits of even unsanctified experiences! Looking at the moral that is in the things themselves, quite apart from the teaching of the Spirit—wise sayings that only want the Light of the Spirit to make them guides to our hearts, even by themselves they are guides of conduct. The text is one such, and there are many more. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." That, he says, is the moral which arises even out of the mere fact that we shall die. To live brightly, to care for the least interests, to have well-ordered houses and good taste in dress, and to be cheerful with our friends, and affectionate to our families, and to do our work with the utmost energy, that is plainly sensible and right if we know no more than that we shall die. As we do possess active powers, and as things of interest surround us on all sides, and love and affection are within our reach, we must surely make the most of them for the short time we shall be able to enjoy them. Vice is folly, and self-indulgence stings, and indolence benumbs, so that they at any rate must be cast behind us; and while we have them we must throw ourselves

into the best and brightest things we have, "because there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest," no energy, no ingenuity, no accumulated learning, no intellectual kingdom in the dust. Therefore, while daylight lasts, climb the mountain-peak and gaze upon the sun as long as ever your eyes can follow him.

That is the world's wisdom; and therefore this motto which I have chosen for our text is often the guiding principle of those who have no other. You see it quoted in books, you see it written up before your eyes, you hear it from lips which have learnt no higher wisdom; and it is very good indeed, so far as it goes, and to the most religious person is a high, full-toned reminder of daily duty,—if it be wreathed round the foot of His cross we shall find no better. St. Paul did wreath it there, when he said, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men."

So then let us take it: let us see what it enjoins on us as a duty; and let us remember now that we take it not as the bitter-hearted Preacher spoke it, but as the halo-crowned Apostle beheld it, marking the way of Calvary as well as the court of Jerusalem, and chiselled as it were upon the lintel of that grave, which was not to him the burial place of wisdom and love, but which stood empty since the First-born from the dead had burst its bonds, and gone forth from it.

What then it bids us carry into life is, in one word, Animation. Do all things with animation. Be animated yourself. Do not be heavy and slow. Carry animation into your whole province of work. And as the old poet sang, "Let not your own kingdoms drowse in leaden dulness."

We hear it said sometimes that even wrong things done with energy give more hope of a character than goodness pursued without interest. That is of course not true; we can do no harm, however slight, without corrupting ourselves more than by the feeblest goodness. The

conscientious child is a stronger man than the now victorious sinner. But that the thought should ever be expressed, and occur to one, as it sometimes will, 'when we pity the wretchedness of life without passion, is a witness of the unbounded power of Animation within us and in the sphere of our action.

If ever you see the spirit of the world incarnate in one man—if you see him polished, quiet, subtle, cultivated, selfish, sure to win such battles or such games of life as he enters into, contemptuous of mental power less than his own, and of principle which would militate against his power,—that man will tell you "enthusiasm is a mistake." He would sum up for you the experiences of his life by telling you to dismiss zeal. "Beyond all—No Zeal." It is the way to reach unscrupulous eminence for the individual. And it is the way to lay society in ashes. When all the leading men of a nation have reached that level, then comes the fall of the Roman Empire, then comes the French Revolution. But the great Statesman who places his country at the head of the world in arms, and arts, and counsel, tells men they must count nothing dear to themselves but their great cause. He traces the downfall of all to this one simple principle found in the bosoms of the selfish masses, that they say "I leave the interests of others and the public interests to other, wiser heads than mine. My own affairs are enough for me, and no doubt others will look to greater affairs." Whether it is a great country, or a great church, or the tone and character of a society like ours, if you leave others to try to produce an effect while you stand by, you are what Pericles would call a traitor to Athens; and if you take a fairly conscientious part without zeal and without animation, you leave hearts to harden and wrongs to be done; you make that seem unlovely which is most beautiful, and that indifferent which is most admirable. Not the evil-doer himself does so much as you to destroy the relief, and the relative value, and the natural colouring of truth and of knowledge.

And can we gain this if we have it not? Most assuredly. The mere *attempt* to express what we feel, whether we

succeed or not, the mere indication of hidden fire, the mere glance of delight, will make others eloquent, will make others burn, will rouse sympathy. The slight stir or ripple which we make in other minds in simplest ways will react upon ourselves. But if we never stir, our motionless goodness will allow the cold ice to creep over all around us, and though last, yet certainly at last, it will penetrate our veins too. There is nothing more easy than to despise evil and keep aloof from it, and when we have done so long enough we shall find ourselves locked in by it, and we shall become part of it.

As the hardest marble of to-day was a fluid mass long ages since, so hearts, which once were soft, are firm enough and immovable now. And the process has been very gradual, as much an operation of nature in one case as the other. So much so, and so clearly seen in the earliest records of man to be a natural process by natural laws, that those records, speaking of one marked instance, say again and again, it was "the Lord who hardened Pharaoh's heart,"—hardened it as much as He made the sun rise, or the ocean flow.

He who *will* use unmeant words of evil day by day; he who will give way to low thoughts from time to time; he who will resist the voice which bids him be truthful in one small thing after another; he who will not heed the sense of duty as the minutes fly, becomes profane, and coarse, and false, and slothful. It is the Lord's doing.

It is of the Lord that least acts of goodness have their reward, and of the Lord that least acts of wickedness have their reward too—that they shall gradually corrupt our spirit, our affection, our compassion within; then our manners, then our face; and at last every one who is of another heart sees the sign written in our foreheads.

But let us turn to a brighter side. The little kindness, the ready protection to man, the heart-breathed instantaneous prayer to God—they have their effect too. And I want, as the sum of all that I have to say on this subject, to beg of you, if you own the power of animation in other things, to carry it energetically into the highest of all

human acts ; to endeavour to be earnest and animated in your prayers to God.

I am afraid that it is possible to go on day after day doing and saying very bad things, and yet to continue to say by heart quite regularly the same prayer as we have always used at our bedside. Never to give up praying, yet never to give up doing the things which the words of our prayer pray we may not do. Is not this very trying, think you, to the ear, the Eternal heart, that listen to those prayers? Do you not understand the word "long-suffering," when you think of this?

But it could not be so were you to pray with animation—to say something, however small, day by day, in new words, words that expressed your wish for improvement—to say just this sincerely to God before you began your usual prayer.

It would *not* be possible to do that without improving—and why? because it would be a mark of *life*—and what is prayer but the placing life in contact with life?—human life in contact with divine life? *Now*, think what follows—bringing your own life to touch God's Life.

What would follow when the life that is in you so melts into the Life of God? How could it possibly be otherwise than that your petition should be answered, or you satisfied entirely not to have been answered? Life would meet Life and blend with it.

Our Lord spoke of the terribleness of the pageant of prayer which He saw in the streets of Jerusalem, when those who never prayed alone prayed ostentatiously for all men to see them. But it is only an inferior degree of acting when we say over to God petitions which we do not care that He should fulfil.

Let us try to be animated in prayer, and we shall be animated in life, and other lives will be the better for it. We cannot tell how. We cannot see the mystery, but we know that the Life of God would flow down into us, and then from us, and would inspire and fill the Life of Man.

## SERMON XVI.

### FORSAKEN IDEAL.

ST. JOHN vi. 66.

*“From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him : Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away ?”*

THIS sorrowful appeal from the less noble but natural feelings of the twelve to their very highest and most spiritual thoughts was not in this case in vain.

It was natural that the twelve should be affected by the sight of “many disciples” withdrawing disappointed from their Master ; natural that they should ask themselves, Is then this doctrine after all true which is so little persuasive ? Is this man after all the True Prophet, to whom the hearts of Israel are so little inclined ? Or, supposing the teaching to be true in itself, is it of too difficult a character for practical life—these “hard sayings,” as so many feel them to be ? are these riddles, these difficulties, really likely to prevail over vice, to set God’s kingdom, for which we have sighed, afoot among a fallen people—is it wise, is it safe, to adhere to Him any longer ?

We see many a familiar face, many a longing soul, many a kind heart, many a strong head, parting now and for ever from Him whom for a while they have followed earnestly and self-denyingly. Shall we yet nurse hopes, shall we yet cling to faith in Him ? Shall we set ourselves up to be wiser than the rest ?

But the appeal, “Will ye also go away ?” revealed the higher nature of the Apostles, perhaps even to themselves ;

showed them that there was something within themselves beyond the judgment of the many and of the worldly wise, which, without arrogance, could judge more forcibly, more wisely; enabled them to see more bright and clear than ever the excellence of that Ideal which now for many months had been before them.

They had not known—they could not know, that their Friend and Master was the Son of God. But they had seen before them a model of perfection in human thought, wisdom, holiness, truth. When He had reasoned with them of these things, He had awakened up in their hearts the feeling that it was possible for themselves to change, and put away their besetting sins. They had felt, and prayed, and striven like men who are earnest in longing after all such holiness to come to them; to whom it has been shown how it may come, and in whom has dawned a glorious hope that it will come.

Therefore they said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal life."

Ah! men are not always thus. The appeal to the Ideal is not always responded to. Depression makes men lift but a languid eye to it; sin makes them turn and start, and grieve as they avert their faces. Happy are they who will not lightly part with their Ideal.

Let us look at one or two of those clear sketches of human character which bear on this subject in the Gospels—those sharp outlines which have immortalised nameless men—ere we turn to ourselves and our ideals and our danger of forsaking them.

There was one who had listened to the conversation of Christ, and watched until the fire kindled, and at the last he spoke and said, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." His Ideal was revealed to him, or perhaps new-born within him. Here was One with whom it were perfect happiness to be for ever. To see and listen to the acts and words of Jesus, to follow and grow like Him, would be a lifetime's feast. But in that moment there flashed on him other tendernesses, other cares,—his foot halts; he cannot make the plunge; he must wind up all his former life,

indulge in it yet a little, part from it by degrees. I will follow Thee, but suffer me first to bid farewell to them who are at my house.

We know not what was the end, as we know not the man's very name. He comes out a distinct figure in the narrative for one moment, and passes into shadow again. But we know Christ's steadfast answer—He that putteth hand to plough and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of heaven. He who sees clearly his Ideal of Holiness, and will not cleave to it, comes not within My region of thought and life.

Again: there is the sad tale of the young nobleman, whose stainless life and clear conscience from boyhood showed that he was on his way towards a high Ideal. For those who live thus from boyhood do not walk in darkness. Sooner or later a divine truth brings out before them a pattern higher than they have yet known; and as soon as they see it, the throbbing impulse of their heart is to cleave to it and yield themselves wholly up to it. Then comes the question—Are they strong enough? Have they, together with keeping stainless, sought to gain nerve and self-control? Can they clear the short bound which still lies between them and perfectness? One effort will suffice; but will they make it?

In the instance I quote we know it was not made. Much had he done—the one thing left was to wean himself from love of riches. And so Christ told him, as he looked upon him and loved his aspiring soul.

“What lack I yet?” One thing; clasp poverty to thy heart, now that thou art rich, and then thou shalt possess thy earthly ideal,—what thou hast sighed for—and more; far beyond that, a treasure which thou hast not yet conceived. Thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

Alas! when he heard that, he went away—sorrowful, for he had great possessions. A second instance of abandoning the guiding star. Sorrowful to think that anything should make him give up his Ideal—sorrowful and vexed to think he was giving it up only for the sake of what he already had. But he went!



We can see the weakness and the sadness in another. Can we see it in our own cases? Let us try.

Sorrowful he went, for what sorrow can compare to theirs who surrender a high Ideal for a material benefit—a sorrow which is beautifully touched in the parable, which some of you at least know, of her who set out early in the day to follow her dear native spring, near which she was born, till it should lead her to the unknown sea—the often dreamt-of, longed-for sea. Followed it well for a long time—but grew footsore and heart-weary as it changed and changed—brook, and cataract, and broad smooth stream, and rocky bed, but never a sight of ocean, till, weary and discouraged at last, she turned away wilfully into the meadows, saying—

“ I despair  
Of that wide and glorious sea  
That was promised unto me ;”

and there abode, and never regained strength to resume the abandoned journey, but went far off, lest she should hear again the loud murmur. And though the grass and the flowers of the meadows were fair in their way—

“ Yet—I sometimes think, and thinking  
Makes my heart so sore—  
Just a few steps more—  
And there might have shone for me,  
Blue and infinite, the sea.”

The brook represents to us our present life—limited, and yet restless ; narrow, yet with capabilities of opening into what is very great. And the sea represents what that greatness is—the endless power and strength and life of that to which our souls may come if we will be faithful.

Who can tell *what* a sorrow it is for a soul to have set a really high ideal before it, and then to have taken the step of turning away, and to reflect for the rest of life on what might have been, with a little more resolution, a little more perseverance, a little more faith in God.

Even the youngest of you know, to some extent, what is meant by an Ideal. It is, indeed, characteristic of the youngest age especially to form some ideal for ourselves. To set before us that when we grow up we will be what some one has been whom we admire, or that we will take such a course, separate from and greater than others have done,—we will be like such and such a person,—or we will be this and that in our lives, only in a higher, nobler, more striking way than any one has yet been.

Such, I suppose, are the thoughts that flash often before the eyes of all high-minded, noble-spirited boys, and as they grow older and stronger the particular form may change, yet all of whom highest hopes are cherished continue to have such ideals, various as human life itself is, but in some shape or other before them. And the highest hopes of all, if we could be in a position to form them—if we could see as perhaps the angels see—would centre round those who form and keep such views as to the cultivation of their *characters*; whose ideals are not conceived for the eyes of men and what they will think, but who look to God Himself in Christ.

But let us pause to think of dangers that beset us here. For the lighter the light the darker the shadow that contrasts with it.

There is the danger of Apathy. Even to look on such an ideal without love is hardening. To have a conception of some nobleness in character, and not to wish to possess it, not to make some effort after it, lowers us.

There is the danger of Changeableness in our ideals—waste of time and power. As we all have different characters, as our capabilities differ, so do our conceptions. Then, to exchange our own for other men's views (even if they be more impressive) is often dangerous. Our characters grow; they are not suddenly made.

Again the danger of Misjudging other ideals. It is vain for us to think how well we should do in another man's place, instead of being earnest in doing well in our own. Whether our place is higher or lower than others,—our duty plainer or more intricate, our powers less or more

—there is nothing more foolish than to be sketching out what such a one ought to do; what opportunities he has if he would use them; how clearly; strongly, we should act were we in his place; to complain that it is only our situation that is harassing, only our difficulties that hamper us and fret us, and prevent us from aiming as high as we once thought we would.

But, if it is hardening to look on an ideal goodness without loving it, if it is dangerous to gaze and wish for ideals which cannot be our own, instead of being careful about our own, what is the degradation of gradually or suddenly exchanging a high ideal for a low one?

Yet this is the particular danger which awaits all who have had a happy, a long-continued, an elevating education. During the time of education, if it comes to second good influences, the thought of being as men just, and generous, and true, and pure, rises most brightly before us. And at our entrance into the world, if not before, we are surrounded at once by a shock and tumult of voices crying out, "Come down from your ideal—come down—and be as we; come down and dwell with us."

Then it is that many a disciple goes away and walks no more with Him.

"All we are worldly, all we are impure, all we seek riches and spend them on ourselves, all we lie one to another, and all we understand what we do, all we overreach, all we seek all the enjoyment we can get, all we are for the world and its delights, all we are against God most high."

Such is the chorus that many a man has to hear when he is hunted out of the chamber of his own heart into this world's tumult: a chorus not chanted with the voice, but humming audibly in the lives of many.

What sorrow is for him who listens and believes, and is deaf to the still small voice in his own heart! How shall we fortify ourselves against such temptation, how help following the many disciples who go away, how keep our footing on the rocks while the stream of downward floating souls rolls over us—how, but by gazing on the ideal that

we pursue, strengthening our eyesight, accustoming our selves to walk strongly after it now?

The weakest of characters, the most unable to stand against any trial, is that of the boy who has never formed any such conception that there are high qualities to be gained, high motives to be acted on.

And the next most liable to fall is that of the boy or man, who, while he knows himself to be naturally, or through habit, thoughtless, will not force himself as often as he can to be thoughtful. He complains with sorrow that he *is* thoughtless, and that a temptation carries him away before he knows it, and he cannot therefore see what assurance he has that it will not always be so with him.

He would soon have the best assurance if he would try to be thoughtful when he *has* opportunity—when the hour of temptation is *not* upon him. No one can say that he has not often presented to him the pattern of what he should be and might be. God offers it constantly. It is in this there lies the use, and here the abuse of our Daily Prayers, public and private, and, above all, of the Holy Communion.

It is for this cause that we see these two things so change and affect the character. One who, out of mere carelessness, neglects to prepare for the Holy Communion, who then feeling his want of seriousness does not like to come, throws away God's own opportunity for cultivating true soberness of mind, true judgment, true strength under the most favourable circumstances. Resolutions made under the Shadow of the Cross, if they are not certain never to be broken, are at least more likely to be kept than any others. Men of the world are the first to value the character thus produced, though they cannot read the secret of it.

And as we come morning and evening into this fair house to pray—with abundant time for every other occupation—nothing demanded of us here for a few minutes, books in our hand, holy words passing before our eyes, ringing in our ears,—each boy who does not for that short space of

time give himself to what is before him, force his wandering thoughts to confine themselves, compel his reluctant heart to pour its confession into the ear of God, stir his idle heart to look on the character of Christ, and at nothing else—he, as the service moves through, from its beginning to its close, is parting with what he never can recover, one more opportunity for beholding, loving, copying the highest Ideal given among men.

Some are tempted by the laughter of the ignorant to surrender enthusiasm for that which they know to be beautiful and good—some are tempted by the success of the small-hearted to surrender their enthusiasm for what is unearthly, or their firm belief that it is possible to live holily in the life of every day—some from the conversation of their elders or their equals, are tempted to take poor models and low ideals, and to shut out from their sight things that are really great and lofty, by crouching down before low objects that are very near them.

All these are delusions which we may clear away by the exercise of the pure wisdom from on high which it is given to every Christian soul to learn and use. All are delusions which will fly from the face of Christ and from the spell of His presence if you invoke it.

Surely this is the last word we would utter to those who pass now from our influence, and from the influences, whatever they may be, which in the name of Christ this place has excited in them. The very walls seem to speak to them in Christ's name, and say, "Will ye go away from Him that hath the words of Eternal Life?" And turning your backs on all that has impeded you here—for it cannot be but that offences many, hindrances many, must have come to you while you lived with us; many things that drew you away from Christ, among many things that led you towards Him—will you not also say, "Lord, we will not leave Thee, only do Thou Thyself hold us firmer to Thee than ever: if we have done harm to any soul by our carelessness or our wrong-doing, let Thy Cross and Passion abolish the evil both in ourselves and others, and give us

grace to undo the evil we have done : if we have striven to do aught for Thine honour, if we have loved Thee, let Thy love and the love of Thine honour abide in the place we leave " ?

At the end of a year, and of a term which, as it seems to me, has been rich in the undeserved blessing of God beyond former terms and former years—when those who have known the school longest, and loved it best, are able to say thankfully that here the ideal which is before the eyes of all is not in vain—that the school has risen in tone and in feeling, in earnestness and love of duty, let us thankfully own what we owe to those who have—not always with popularity—set their faces against the evils that are among us. It is to the Christ-loving spirits among us that any vital change or improvement must be held due ; it is to love of God and sympathy with men that any elevation must be traced ; no others have clear aims before them ; no others are impelled, they know not how, not merely to dislike evil-doers, not merely to laugh at and despise the low, and the self-indulgent, and the foolish, but to discern the slumbering spark of good, and to be driven by a divine impulse to try to fan it into flame—no others hold that spiritual power of sympathetic influence which streams from God, which melts what it reaches, and blesses him who is the instrument of conveying it.

And if there are any whose lives, whose words, whose thoughts are against the upward progress of the body in which they live—think what you are doing. There is Christ's own work to be done ; work to be done by you (for you know as well as I do that there is no Member of the Body without its part and influence), and will you too go away ? Remember that none can do what is given *you* to do. If you despise it, it goes undone for ever.

Find out your work, then ; find out the best outline of it, the ideal of it, and pursue it ; knowing that in so doing you follow Christ, you follow light, you follow after life : " For he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life "—not in darkness with its fears

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and fantasies, and exaggerations of earthly objects, but with the light of life before him, fixed in a sure place to guide him, shining in a broad clear track on the face of the sea, shining on his face, and rejoicing his eyes with its beauty—not a light only, but a life, a breath, a spirit from on high.

## SERMON XVII.

### CROSS-ROADS OF DEATH.

PROV. xiv. 12.

*"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."*

THE two beautiful chapters of the Proverbs of Solomon which are read for the First Lessons of morning and evening prayer to-day, are to-day read for the last time as Sunday Lessons in the Church of England. Sunday Lessons will not, according to the revised rubrics, be taken from the Proverbs, except in the occasional years when there are five or six Sundays between the Epiphany and Septuagesima. We will take for our thoughts this morning one of those compressed phrases in which speaks the quiet luminous wisdom of experience, sometimes sadly—sometimes, as it may seem to us, almost despairingly, about one too common character; but again always confidently, that even one good thing in any character may; if it is steadily followed out by its owner, or if it is delicately handled and encouraged by the careful discernment of his natural guides, be certainly brought to bear both blossom and fruit to himself, to the world, to his God.

The Jews did not attribute to the Book of Proverbs the high intimate inspiration of other parts of the Bible. It does not soar into intercourse with God. It does not throw itself into deep passionate devotion. It addresses itself to the young, whose hearts have not been deeply stirred by any great sorrow, or any great conversion. To man in the



full heat and burden of his laborious day it speaks, bringing out into distinct relief the characters of the many who surround him. To the elderly man it appeals by the light of his own experience, showing him how to make it profitable to others. It takes the same part which some practical thinkers in Greece took, and some also in less-known countries, telling always of the broad lines of life, what is folly and what is wisdom, what ends in honour, and what in regret. But we hear in this book the low breathing still of the over-brooding Spirit of God, who speaks here with a certainty of utterance, not vouchsafed to other races, and lights the scene with a clearness which is not of sun or moon. In the Book of Proverbs there is an end looked to which is far beyond earthly honour and earthly shame, earthly joy, earthly regret. It is the *last* end. What the king of Israel looks forward to is Life or Death. He knows that there is a life for the spirit of man. He is taught that there is a *death*. He sees that an undying life or an endless death awaits mankind. In his clear vision therefore, wisdom leads to righteousness, and righteousness to life, folly to sin, and sin to death.

But these characters of wisdom and folly, righteousness and iniquity, are characterised and crossed by a thousand cross-lights and delicate tints. There are such things as deceived lives, as delusions, as self-deceits, and it is one of these softer shades, but not less fatal, over the gloom of which he mourns, in the words we have just chosen: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

The image used is a very simple one, but still requires care. This way which seemeth right unto a man does not, you perceive, lead direct to death. It is a way which, after going on steadily for a time, divides into many ways. It is a road which brings you to a star of cross-roads, and then, whichever of these ways you choose, each of them brings you by a shorter or a longer route to the region of the land of death.

The first way would *not* seem right to a man if death were simply at the end of it. It is not so. "There is a

way which seemeth right unto a man, but the *end of it* are the *ways*" (the divers branching-off roads) "of death,"—the various paths which lead to death.

Now, first of all, let us think what those various paths are which lead to death, and which branch off from the one way we are considering; then afterwards we will think what that one way is—the stem of the branching ways which lead to death. There is the Way of Coldness first—the inaccessibility to warm affection and good and kindly feelings; the reading or hearing of great actions and not being stirred; the hearing of noble self-denial and thinking it foolish; the having great motives for being good, wise, diligent, but choosing to be bad, foolish, idle.

That Way of Coldness ends in death. If he has a duty he cannot avoid, it is *just* done and no more. If he has to exact a duty, he is hard and inconsiderate. If he sees another going wrong, it is no business of his. If he speaks, reads, has represented to himself, or represents to another, even the words and ways of perfect holiness, still he carries about with him the same freezing atmosphere. If we feel any such danger of coldness approaching us, we should do all we can speedily against it, for if we give ourselves up to it, we shall die, and we shall die unloved.

Another of the Cross-roads to death is Selfishness; sometimes it takes the form of the last character; it will be cold to others, because it fancies it will interfere with its own peace to be interested in them; or, if it care for others, it makes favourites of them and spoils them. It tries to turn all things to account for itself, and cares not how things are spoiled for others. The happiness of home, the happiness of those about us, the happiness of the poor, are all set aside on a great scale or a mean scale; others minister to our comfort, but not we to theirs. This hateful character takes sometimes another form, the form of passionate gratification of bodily appetites. And this is indeed a living death. Then all that is given us to be a beautiful and rich store for this life's joy and peace, all that is given us to be an eternal well-spring of happy and strong and

useful influence, is perverted and corrupted. It is like setting a conduit of bright wine to flow into a stagnant marsh. That is the life of indulged passion, another cross-road leading to death.

Again, there is the By-path of *Ur*-belief. Some, who do still believe, are moving towards that path. All holy beliefs, all holy truths, are given from God to be made parts of our life, principles of action. If we however rightly try at one time to feel as if Jesus Christ had died for our sins, and put up our prayers to be forgiven; and then at another time live, speak, act as if sin or holiness made no difference to us, if our talk contradicts our prayers, if our thoughts are, by our own voluntary permission, lawless and base, while our lives are decorous, do you think that we shall continue to *believe*? Do you think it can be suffered that the precious deposit, the jewel of the faith of God, should be allowed to lie in so dishonoured a life, so corrupt a heart? It will be taken away. If you could follow that boy through life, you could see that he is almost obliged to lay down practices and habits of holiness which now he does value, in spite of the contradictory war which is going on in him. Which, beloved, which side is prevailing in any one of our hearts? If now you believe, and value your belief, that God loves *you*, and that at the same time He loves holiness—oh, consider that God cannot part with holiness, but that with *you*—yes, even with *you*—it *is* possible even for Him to part. Hold by that holiness which alone can ensure your holding by your faith, which alone can ensure your holding by Life itself.

Then there is the Cross-road of death which is called Hypocrisy. Some have principles higher than their profession, but the hypocrite has profession higher than his principles. He whose real principles are higher than his profession, ought to bring up his outward profession to the level of his principles for the sake of others; for it is not right that you should let others be deceived into thinking that high principles need not be avowed. But the hypocrite, for his own sake, must bring his principles up

to his profession. This is a short way to the death of the soul.

There is the Cross-road of Pleasure. One that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth, says St. James. There is the awful road of Leading others into sin. He too is dead already, says Christ Himself—"it were good for him if he had never been born."

And now, then, what is the Great Road "which seemeth right unto a man," but which ends in all these Ways of death, and in others too which will suggest themselves to all, the broad, the open, the coarse ways of sin? in falsehood, profanity, impureness, intemperance, which no one mistakes—what is it which leads to all these? It is clearly that one state of mind, that one habit of life, which King Solomon speaks of in such a variety of forms. It is the way of *Undiscipline*.

It is the state of mind in which every man lives self-satisfied, who never exacts from himself an answer to the question as to whether he improves in character from day to day. If we never question ourselves at all as to whether certain qualities which we know full well by name are increasing in us, we shall be quite certain to think all is well with us. A man's life always does seem right in his own eyes who sets nothing before him to aim at beyond what he is himself at the present hour. If he only *supposes* that a time will come in which he shall have left off certain bad habits which he has; if he only supposes that as he gets older he will get more self-controlled, he will probably do so; but his self-control so gained, merely by getting older, will only keep him from things of which the world would speak ill. It is not a self-control that rules the thoughts for instance, or will make us in private what we wish to seem in public. If he only supposes that age will cure certain faults, then he ought to know that age will bring with it certain others which will be not better, but worse, baser, stronger faults. If he supposes that as he grows older he will grow more devout, then he is wrong. It is not easy at any time to take to praying earnestly and growing by contact with the Spirit of God;

we require perhaps for this a more careful training than for any one use of our mind or soul besides ; and moreover it is a training in which others may help us by suggestions a little, but which, upon the whole, we must find out for and give to our own selves.

If, then, it seems attractive to those who are young and inexperienced to be going on from day to day without taking any pains with themselves (I mean with the thoughts of their hearts, with their imaginations, with their affections), it is to them that our Bible speaks most strongly, telling them that this attraction is the special snare which they can easily lay for themselves, for themselves and for each other. One who is under its influence, says another Proverb, is "wiser in his own conceit than seven men who can render a reason." He has no reason to give ; he only says, "It is natural to my age ; I feel inclined to it ; I am drawn by my impulses ; I do not see others overcome it." What then is this but the Way that seemeth right to a man while the end of it are the Ways of Death ?

But every single man or boy who, in his own life, is overcoming this attraction, defeating that which seems natural, rising into that which is good day by day, he is (1) following—(though perhaps he may be the last so to realise the fact to himself)—stedfastly following that righteousness of which another Proverb says that "in the pathway thereof there is *no* death ;" and (2) he is, though he perhaps knows it less than others, helping in the most effective way those weaker ones who as yet have not tried their strength. To every one who will thus walk in the more difficult, but perfectly blessed path that leads to life, God will give not only his own soul, but the souls of many others for his reward. To him are truly addressed the striking and the strengthening words of encouragement which the Epistle of to-day pours out, assuring us that if we labour on we shall not fail ; but that every stroke of honest labour, every step gained in the way of wisdom, and in the way of holiness, is far more than its own gain, is a pledge certain not to be disappointed of greater progress hereafter.

It must be so ; for gains in holiness are not our own gains ; they are gifts of God ; we labour, but what we gain is in the effect beyond all proportion to the effort that we make. For we are doing not only earthly work, we are using grace from God, exercising a spirit which God gave and which God made to live with Him. He has made us, says that Epistle, “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”—not yet fit for it, but started upon the Way to be fit.

## SERMON XVIII.

### LIGHT-HEARTED WICKEDNESS.

EPH. v. 6.

*"Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."*

ON two successive Sundays in Lent the Epistles of the day warn all men, especially the inexperienced, of the corrupting and destructive effect of trifling with sin. Weightier words are not to be found surely than those in which last Sunday we read, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness; he therefore that despiseth, despiseth not men, but God;" or those which we have just heard, "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh wrath." "*Because of these things.*" Those vices, namely, which he now mentioned, but *also* with them because of "foolish talking and jesting." It is not only sin, but levity on the subject of sin, which merits certain anger.

It is plain why it should be so; such frivolous folly as speaking lightly about the one really dangerous and for ever deadly thing in the universe, such unfeelingness as to that which ought to move at once the deepest horror, and the tenderest pity, and the divinest compassion, must have a fearful potency to draw us away from truth and light and love, to estrange us from God

He who has

“ Taught his tongue to wound  
His conscience with a sinful sound,”

may soon hope to learn

“ The black art to dispense  
A separate sin to every sense ;”

or if by some strange miracle he is so fenced by God's providence, that he escapes until his most dangerous temptations are over, what pain it is to look back on a year or two of his life, in which, while Christ went on sowing the word of God, *he* was sowing in the ears and hearts of his fellows evil thoughts to hide and choke the holy seed !

“ Let no man deceive you with vain words.” Let no one tell you that this is a venial sin, a pardonable, excusable, easily-forgotten error, for “because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience.”

We will to-day take three points by which to see the truth in opposition to the deceptions of vain words.

1. The character of such trifling with sin—viz., that it is open disobedience to God.

2. The consequence of it—viz., God's displeasure.

3. That in Christ Jesus into whom *we* have been baptised, we are called to something which is the exact contrary of all such evil.

1. The Disobedience. No one can say that the directions of our Heavenly Father are not very plain on this subject. There is no disguise in His Word. There is nothing that can be misunderstood. All through the Bible, like a low, rolling thunder, as it were, afar off, is heard this utterance from heaven : “because of these things cometh the wrath of God.”

Neither is there any disguise in the acts of His providence. Here, if anywhere, we see His visible Hand. In the decrepitude of tainted lives, in the disappearance of polluted races, is written with large letters in His own



Hand, that "because of these things the wrath of God cometh."

I said the will of our Heavenly Father was plain on this point—but is there not something very significant—is it not almost a disowning of Fatherhood towards unworthy sons that, speaking of sinners of this class, St. Paul calls them by this special name "the sons of disobedience?"

But here one "deception of vain words" arises which we should meet. It might be said, "The punishment being as it is, so heavy and so wide, does it not show the temptation to be very great? And will not the greatness of the temptation be our excuse? And will not the number of the fallen plead for them with a merciful God?" But in answer to this must we not own that number is a consideration wholly and entirely outside of the question—which is simply this, "What is the definite consequence of a given act?" The number of men who sin can no more avert the consequence of sin, than the number of such as might fling themselves over a precipice could save one of them from being drowned in the sea. This is our error which we shall never overcome till we get to look on sin and punishment in the light of truth; on punishment not as a vengeance taken, but as a simple consequence; evil and its consequence are part of one and the same phenomenon.

And as to the question whether the greatness of temptation is not our excuse, it proceeds from the same kind of fallacy as the other. We know of no kind of probation except that of temptation—no kind of advance except that which is obtained by overcoming temptation. Temptation is no more a *cause* of evil than it is a *cause* of good. It is indifferent in itself; we may use it for either end. But this we may fairly observe, that if any temptation is peculiarly great, we may be quite sure that it is proportioned to the end to be gained; that a very important probation, a very searching test, a very difficult ordeal certainly does imply that great stress is laid on the way in which it will be passed; that the virtue to be shown in passing it is a very precious virtue, and the crown reserved for it a very glorious one.

2. And now we come to the second point. The certainty of God's wrath upon it. The deception of vain words with regard to it takes, I suppose, this form. Is God's wrath so certain? Are we sure we see it? Are there not so many instances of evil lives unpunished as greatly to qualify that certainty?

I would ask you first to notice that St. Paul by no means says, "the wrath of God *is* come." He says, "*it will come*," or more exactly, "*it is coming*;" and while we do say that God's displeasure is already very visible, and not to be mistaken, we say also that there is no reason to think that even where it has been most visible it is spent or exhausted.

But let any one of moderate experience say whether it has not fallen to his lot to see the penitent lifted up, to see the bold sinner struck in the midst of his impiety, to see the secret unsuspected sinner suddenly revealed, suddenly stranded, while men lay their hands on their mouths and wonder silently.

This tale of life is written in a thousand books. But can we deny that often the real sinner goes on light-heartedly sinning still with a high hand, while the repentant sometimes finds no place of repentance, but in his heaviest hour, in his very despair, is swept away to some most heavy punishment?

We *would* not deny it; it is just as it should be. There is quite enough evidence to show that sin and suffering go *on the whole* together even in this world, and no more. Did they go accurately together; were there no accounts left to be made up; were sin and suffering always at any given time exactly adjusted; were they ever adjusted; were the adjustment ever *nearly* accurate; this would be the best of arguments for unbelief in a divine retribution, for unbelief in a life to come. God has shown us only just enough in this life to show that sin and suffering are brothers, and inseparable—but He has told us also that what we call our life is only a *beginning* of life; that we lay but the foundation before we die, the real building goes on beyond the clouds; we prepare here, we perfect

there ; we work here, we are paid there ; we set the wheels of cause in motion here, we obtain the effect in the world to come. Our mortal body is but the engine by which our spirits toil ; in the conditions of our spiritual life to come we shall realise what our spirits have by their own exertions become.

But thirdly. St. Paul speaks of disobedience, and he speaks of punishment as for *outsiders*, not for those to whom he directly writes. To them he uses different arguments : sin and trifling with sin in word or jest for them are not *convenient*, i.e. not appropriate. What is appropriate for them is "that which becometh saints," that which "is becoming to holy men," and why? because they *are* holy : they have promised God in their baptism that they will be holy : they pray to Him every day that He will enable them to be holy : when they are betrayed into anything which is contrary thereto, they lament it with sincerity ; holy they are now, holy they desire to be for ever.

"Once they were in darkness, but now they are light in the Lord." The deeds of daylight, thoughts, and words, and acts of which they never can be ashamed, which they never need dread to have known to any one or every one hereafter ; these are the thoughts and words and deeds which characterise them. They have no consciousness henceforth of guilty secrets, nor even of *doubtful* acts or words. This is the actual service of God ; this is a happy service, killing with a good will evil inclinations which we have determined and vowed to kill, carefully preserving, carefully gaining all old, all new ideas and habits, which they have found tend to holiness, or which they have reason to believe will help them still onward.

They are not only the Children of Light ; they are themselves Light. A mistranslation here sadly mars the context and the argument ; instead of "whatsoever doth make manifest is light," in this morning's Epistle, we should read, "whatsoever is made manifest is light"—i.e. whatsoever the light shines on clear and full, becomes as it were part and parcel of the light, each natural object

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reflecting light in a thousand varied hues ; seems to become itself a source of beauteous light. The Christian soul into which God himself shines, which invites God to shine there, which loves to feel His brightness, and desires not that any of the things there should be hidden from Him, or reserved from Him, this soul shines brightly, this soul itself *is* Light.

## SERMON XIX.

### THE DECEIVER'S APPEAL.

PROV. xx. 17.

*"Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."*

FROM time to time any one who is careful "and wise unto salvation," as the Bible says (and which of us can bear the thought of being either of the only other two things that are left us to be—viz. wise to our own destruction, or foolish to our own destruction, cleverly bringing it on ourselves, or blindly dropping down into it?) any one then who has any of this "wisdom unto salvation," which is evidently wanted by us all, whether we know how to express our want or not, will find that one main point of that wisdom is from time to time to question himself seriously, to question his conduct, to question his language, as to whether any new fault or sin may be stealing upon him unawares.

As he sees others fall unexpectedly he may possibly fall unexpectedly himself, but certainly he will not fall unexpectedly without having some symptoms of that possibility beforehand. No man commits a sin which is the very opposite of his heart and nature. A man may commit a sin which he never thought he should commit, but he will not do so unless he has carelessly allowed his heart to become full of the tendency towards it. Fire will not break out when there is no fuel.

This *carelessness* about their own hearts and minds is

of all things the one which most stores men's hearts with dangerous material. Month after month it is possible to go on gathering a little more and a little more of evil thought, evil knowledge, evil habit, evil association, until the temptation comes which explodes the heaped-up heart—and then the man after his sin finds himself as it were faint and bleeding; and on the point of death; he will never be the same man again, and all his excuse is that he did not think he could have so sinned, because he had not known himself as he does now.\* Then exhausted and poor of service, he begins to live a new life; but what a poor life it is, what a weak service he can render, in comparison with one whose spirit from boyhood has only grown stronger and clearer and brighter, because from the first he has known that his heart could not be a good heart unless he took pains to make it good.

Now, let us take to-day only one of those tendencies which may go on being stored up little by little, I mean by very little and by very little, until there is an accumulated mass of it ready to take fire, perhaps from some very small spark, but not easy to extinguish by any power of man.

I will take the example of petty untruthfulness. It is astonishing with what insidiousness untruthfulness creeps on. If a person has suppressed the truth two or three times, at last a suppression which would startle any one else seems to him quite natural; a suppression which will positively deceive his friend or his father very seriously, will not to his eyes wear the look of falsehood at all. Again, a habit of making frivolous excuses grows until some excuse presents itself which is positively untrue, but which, if not made, will expose the whole line of unworthy defences. The speaking of one word, which may not be an assertion at all, will to his ear not bring the sound of an untruth; although the person that hears it, and every one who knows of it, may, on account of that one word, be entirely misled.

These are instances in which a very little practice in evil will make real wickedness seem to one harmless, to another necessary, to another almost satisfactory. This is

what the wise prince meant by saying the bread of deceit was sweet. "It's good bread," says the deceiver, "it's like any other bread. Nothing in the world is perfectly satisfactory; industry may fail, innocence may suffer. A little deceit procures a little comfort, and I shall not go far. Harmless Bread, necessary Bread, satisfactory Bread. The Bread of deceit is sweet enough." "Yes it is," says Solomon—and afterwards?

Now you will see that in this passage Solomon does not take a very high ground. It is the wisdom of good sense and experience, and nothing more, which speaks. He does not speak of the Presence of God and the searching eye in the heart of the deceiver. He does not speak of the sharp sting of conscience. He does not speak of the noble and beautiful thought of an honourable, unsullied, undefiled, untainted soul, beginning to be stained, or beginning to wither away before the eye.

He only speaks the unvarying experience of a man who had lived in the world with men of the world. He only just points to the consequences. "And afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel." Where is the Sweetness now? Where is the Bread now? Is it sweet to be ashamed? or, if the deceit is at present locked up in your own breast, is it sweet to be restless and timid, and to dislike those who love you?

I will make a further concession than Solomon makes. I will suppose the man does *not* find the bread of deceit sweet even for a moment. I will suppose he can say with some justice, that it was carelessness more than anything else which involved him in it. Then I come only back to the point from which I started. How mistakenly we commonly judge of carelessness. How real a sin it is. How bitterly it is punished. We make it an excuse, but God plainly "does not like such careless men," when He allows them in mere experience of life to drag down on themselves through carelessness such heavy burdens. I do not see that in nature, in life, in the world, it makes the very smallest difference as regards the consequence whether a man does a wrong thing through carelessness or through

wilfulness. The careless destroys an ancient structure as certainly as the incendiary. The careless dies of the poison which he takes for medicine as certainly as the suicide, and in moral matters, or in the greater affairs of the soul, the careless sins as often and as fatally and as immediately as the wilful. If there is anything in this world which bears upon it the brand of self-punishment, it is carelessness.

But we said we would take to-day the subject of Truth, as one in which carelessness leads the careless into untruthful habits, and then into deceit. And I shall want you to follow me through a very short train of reasoning, of which the axioms shall be most plain, and the steps most clear. •

How may we be certain of the Afterwards of Deceit? How may we be certain that it will infinitely outweigh the present sweetness?

First, then, all things in this world are exactly as they are, and no otherwise. All events in this world happen exactly as they happen, and no otherwise. That is certain.

Again, all things that are, and all things that happen, either happen and are by God's own doing and making, or else being made and done by His creatures, they are liable to God's judgment.

Again, there is not anything or any act which stands alone by itself, cut off from everything before or from everything after. Everything is produced by causes. Everything will act as a cause for something else. Every single thing, little or great, springs out of what went before, and will help to produce something else.

Now again, all things that are done by God's creatures are subject to God's judgment, that is to God's thoughts about it, and God's thoughts about it will themselves produce something. It is not possible, nor even imaginable, that nothing should come of God's thought.

If God, then, approves of a thing, the things that will follow from it are sure to be good and happy things. If He condemns it, they are sure to be good in one sense, but they are absolutely sure to be destructive of that which is



causing evil, and they would not be good unless they were so destructive and baneful and withering to what is evil.

When God, therefore, is judging against something evil, how does He execute that judgment? In four ways He executes it; by means of ourselves in the trouble of conscience; or He executes it by means of others; or He executes it by the results which spring from it in life, or else, if neither by ourselves, nor by others, nor by visible consequences He executes it, then the chain of reasoning, by which we know that He will and must execute it, is so certain, that nature itself teaches us that as time is nothing to God, it is only because His time has not come in His slow working-chain of distant causes and effects, but that a time will come when execution will be done. If the man dies before it is done, so much the more terrible is the certainty.

Now we said that all things are and happen just as they do and are, and no otherwise. And now, what is deceit? Is it not an attempt to make things as they are *not*? a hopeless futile fruitless attempt. If it is an important thing, the consequence may be so much the worse. But if it is a very small thing indeed, still deceit is the mad desire, to make something that is one way be in another way. One way is as it is; that is the real way, the fact, and therefore God's way; another way is the way of your wishes. Who will stand up to say it *is* the way of his wishes, and not as it is in God's way.

When men describe circumstances falsely, when they state them untruly to themselves, when they state them untruly to others, when they endeavour to avert results by substituting what they wish had been for what really was, they may and do succeed, not only in deceiving others, but in deceiving themselves. A mind unable to distinguish truth from falsehood, a tongue not only unwilling, but unable to give truthful statements, a spirit always afraid, looking before and after to see what may come of this or that, these are the first judgments which begin to descend from God upon the careless as well as upon the wilful; these really visibly do appear so that others notice them,

while the judged man is still unconscious. The careless man has taken the poison without intending it, but his death is as inevitable as if he had intended to take it. He makes himself to be one who is in the habit of endeavouring to make things otherwise than they are; and what is he who endeavours to substitute his wishes for God's facts? Is he not an enemy of God?

But we will suppose that he is successful in averting the natural results of previous conduct, what then? Is there not an accumulation even there? He has succeeded in keeping the storm at bay, by denying the very truth of things. Does he in the least or smallest degree suppose that that storm has passed out of existence? It is no doubt a more marvellous thing than we can well realise, that one sin should in the least avert the consequence of another. But you see that that is only a fallacy in our way of speaking. There are not two sins; there is only one sinful person, and he is sinful in a higher degree, and therefore his punishment is at once greater and later. What he calls his *success* is success in this way, that it removes the scene of his judgment, which might have been in this world, right away into the next, and postpones until he is dead what he might and would have been thankful for in his life.

I have known some young persons question, with themselves how it is that in almost the last verses of the Bible there are placed together in one sentence "sorcerers and idolaters and murderers" along with "whatsoever maketh a lie." It seems so simple a thing, so easy to defend oneself and save oneself by a little act of deceit, and the others are such terrible crimes. But the fact is, we must all see that the deceiver is especially a person who, by his own act and deed, resolutely and on purpose *appeals from this life to the next*. He says, "I will not be judged *here*. I will not *now* bear the consequences of what I have done." Who can aid him? How can his best lover and friend protect him? Is it wonderful that Solomon and St. John alike, in speaking of the deceiver, say that his time comes *afterwards*?

But if there is no darker prospect than the careless and wilful deceivers, what prospect is brighter and fairer and sweeter than that which lies before the open eyes, and is invoked by the open lips of truth? Our lips may tremble when we tell God and our friend and our father what we are or what we have done. But that trembling past, what peace, what love, what hope!

No one ever can know anything worse of you than you have said of yourself. There is nothing to find out. There is nothing to dread. The most malicious soul on earth can bring against you no worse accusation than you have made against yourself. You will not feel yourself the fretful enemy of him you have deceived. You know that all men will trust you, and what is better, you know that you are altogether worthy of being trusted. You wish all things that God has done to be as they are; you acquiesce in them, you love them, you know them to be best. Your wishes are not against God's, and therefore God's will is not against you. What virtue, what manliness, what holiness will not come and dwell with you? You can be courageous, for you have not made your spirit cowardly. You can be helpful, for you know the blessing of peace. You can be humble and resigned, for you know all will issue well. You can be prayerful, for to pray brings you not into an atmosphere of dread, but one in which you breathe freely and joyously. You can be holy and every day more holy, for neither man nor Satan can accuse you of acting a part, or being anything but your own good true sincere self.

## SERMON XX.

### THE BRIGHTNESS OF PENITENCE.

LUKE xv. 10.

*“ There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”*

THE ordinary law of sympathy “to weep with those that weep,” is naturally suspended in this instance. When our weeping is for our sins, the angels are glad over us. For indeed our sorrow then is not the chief thing that happens to us, but only an accidental accompaniment of what is happening. Short-lived indeed such sorrow must be, and replaced immediately by that cheerfulness, I might say by those resolutely high spirits which properly belong to those who are succeeding in overcoming great faults, even slowly, more than to those engaged in any other painstaking labour; but the sorrow is not only short-lived, it is so purely an accident, even while it lasts, that it is not taken into the consideration of those who most sympathise with us then.

Our word Repentance carries with it certainly a sorrowful sound, but the Greek original name for Repentance has not the least touch of sorrow in its associations, but signifies, as most of you know, only that grand change of the mind with its aims and thoughts, its reflections and its activities, which is the real essence of Repentance.

It may perhaps be true that the angels, much as they are interested in humanity, desiring to look into the mystery which surrounds it, and joyful in its victory over

its own deplorable weakness and the temptations which beset it, so maliciously well devised, still are not able to be touched to the full with the feeling of our sorrows. And it may be that something even of this appears in the parable which is summed up in the text. We read of the anxieties and labours of the Shepherd for the recovery of his lost sheep, of the diligence of One who seeks for the dropped coin; but the *angelic* sympathy is only spoken of as asked and given when the wanderer and the lost are *found*. It seems indeed in many ways more natural to imagine them not so touched with the feeling of our infirmities as He is touched for us who suffered being tempted, and who took not on Him the nature of angels, but the likeness and reality of manhood. To them our sins against light, our transgressions against grace, our carelessness or woeful folly, our tampering with what has already injured us before, our poor imagination which so fails to represent the realities of things distant, and lets them seem but shadows in comparison with the fleeting brightness of present temptation; to them all this may seem matter of wonder and indignation, and their sense of justice may be so clear, that to them the following up of every sin with its proper punishment, whether that be an instant consequence, or reserved for years to come, seem so natural and so right, so simple an instance of cause and effect, that it may be almost impossible for them to *sorrow* when the wilful wanderer is lost in the wilderness and in the night. Our sorrow which catches with its earliest note the ear of that most High and Holy One who has tabernacled in our flesh, may seem to them but an echo answering to the voice which has dashed itself upon a rock, or little more than a song of the wind which wails itself out in desolate places. They cannot feel for such sorrow, because they cannot understand the previous self-surrender to our own destruction.

And if it be so, then even the more sudden, even the more intense, must be the joy of some pure spirit who has watched in the working of what at first are but natural laws, the alliance between sin and suffering, if presently it

is given him to discern that there is a sorrow which is not in vain, a God-sent sorrow, a healing grief, a grief which heals first the sin and then itself; a remorse which will not eat itself away, but will renew the hardened spirit into the image of a little child, and make it once more capable of the kingdom of heaven and of the love of light.

The angel perhaps could not sorrow in sympathy with a sorrow which was nothing but deserved retribution; but he rejoices with all the joy of his intense nature over the sorrow which works such a miracle. The very gladness which his being drinks in from the glory of God that always lightens him is thrilled as it were with a freshet of new gladness at the contemplation of sorrow that is unto life eternal. Such joy is in the very presence of God's angels; such joy is in heaven itself over one sinner that repenteth.

And this joy of the angels is not theirs only. It soon echoes back to earth again, and fills the heart of him who is repenting. He rejoices over his own sorrow. Many of old time who have repented most utterly, who have most entirely forsaken the things which had once delighted them, changed perhaps their mode of life far more than is at all common in these days, even to an extreme, and with their sin have renounced much that is innocent, much that is beautiful; whatever other experiences they have related, they never have confessed that the life of repentance was a life of melancholy or of gloom. Their fear has rather been always on the side of nervousness, lest that which was so simple and so delightful, when once entered upon, should be no true repentance.

Many kinds of necessary renunciation are accompanied by sorrowfulness, and make themselves felt with bitterness, but not so the renunciation of sin. True to human nature the great artist draws his Antigone, as she passes to her death for what was no crime, sorrowing most acutely for the life and light she leaves behind her, for the wedded love and the love of children, and her aspirations for a diviner justice all unfulfilled. She had cast in her lot with natural affections, and the memory of the dead, and

piety to the world of spirit. She had disobeyed the human law in obedience to the higher law "unwritten." She had done her duty; but that did not make her forgive her enemies, or soften the misery of untimely death. She would stoop to no baseness, but that did not make her joyous. She would die for her right, but sorrow is king over all and after all.

And so again, in one of the noblest of modern fictions, when the world is renounced, and the gray habit assumed, because the world is so crowded with disappointment and betrayal; when all the gods of beauty and joy in whom she had ever trusted, believing that they were the natural companions of strength and of virtue, are renounced by the heroine; she hides her forehead from the sky because there is light in it, and makes her way to the hills because they are gray and dim.

In all this there is truth. Self-conquest is noble, but you must add something to self-conquest to make you joyful. The world is certainly not a home for immortal souls, but they that renounce it must have something else to look for before they can be happy. And what is this something else which gives life to self-conquest and glory to self-renunciation? It is Faith, the Faith which explains to you what you have found in exchange for that which you have given up; the Faith which assures you that your returning is not your own work, but that you have been loved and sought and found at last by a higher power, and a more devoted being than you have known before. This is the teaching of the parable of the Lost Sheep. Self-denying exertion, self-surrendering activities of such Higher Ones are set forth to us in the work of the Shepherd and the Teacher. What would it be to the Lost Sheep that in the midst of his thorn-tangled struggle an unknown hand should grasp him, and an unknown power lift him up? This might be the slayer himself, and this the hour of death. But it is a touch he has known before; it is the voice of the Shepherd which reassures him; he has been sought and found, and the fold shall again receive him.

Be the wandering what it may in these days of ours, be it moral, be it intellectual, one conviction has returned again and again to the wanderer, that behind these startling movements of rudimentary life there is a *something*; and below these simplest moral assurances, there is still a *something*, and at the root of these admonitions of conscience, still a *something* which is not mere association, or habit, or law. The hour of joy for him is that hour in which he who has fallen into sin, or he who has strayed into doubt, grasps once again with a tenacity which will never more be shaken, the truth that the dim form, the shadowed hand which he has seen obscurely moving behind the veil is his own Creator's and Redeemer's; His who has loved him with an everlasting love, and, above all (for it is above all to him), with the human love of a human heart.

And who is there who has not in the course of even a very short life laid up much matter for repentance, much need to return, traversed long tracts to be retrodden? Who does not see more and more as life goes on, that we need to be able to look at duty and at temptation in quite new ways? that "change of mind," and nothing less, is really necessary for us, because we still feel that, after great and long effort, Temptation yet retains a powerful spell over us, and that years of discipline have not sufficed to tear out the fibres of evil from our hearts; after years of care we almost are driven to apply to ourselves Christ's terrible words about "whited sepulchres." So easy it seems for others to believe in us, so difficult to become really worthy of being believed in. Either there rise up from time to time exceptional faults which make our confidence in our own truthfulness or sincerity or purity of heart or justice stagger (and what are these but warnings, if we will so take them, against self-deception)? Or else we are perpetually falling into little faults day by day, which are baser and poorer, and which seem almost more miserably wrong than some great error would be, bringing with them besides the self-avenging fault of self-excuse which hardens into self-deceit. Or again, if we cannot



honestly charge ourselves with these, then while we see so much folly and wrong going on in the circles we belong to, we are still more deeply stung to think that we have never really placed the advantages of higher early care, or early learnt principles which we have enjoyed, in any true sense at the service of others. If they will bring us credit for being richer or more luxuriously brought up, or more carelessly left to be our own masters, then we take care, with more or less of good taste, to let our home associations be known. But the stricter mother, the more devout father, the aged relative whose sight is fixed on realities beyond earth, and whose solemn words are worth treasuring indeed on account of that reality ; these we not only keep locked in our own hearts (as they should be), but we behave (some of us) as if they had no existence, or as if we were not accountable for the good work they have wrought in us ; we behave as if from childhood we had lived among the spendthrift and the profane ; our conduct blackens the reputation of our absent dear ones, and increases the condemnation of the careless ones with whom we live. Their faults are really ours, because we know, when they break out, that honest profession of our principles would have helped them ; but we lacked the courage. Or else we have to own "if my frivolity had not given the impression that I and others were heedless of the right in little things, the tone would never have been so far lowered as to make this conduct possible for others."

Every way, then, in whatever direction we look, we cannot fail to see with ordinary powers of observation, and with common sense, that there is nothing but an honest and true repentance, a confession frank and candid to God (and perhaps also to father and friend) which is in the least likely to lead now to anything like a sound and permanent change. We have seen this most probably a long while back, and yet we have not carried out our intention. More than once we have said to ourselves, "I will to-day take an opportunity of being longer at my prayers, or I will pray at an extra time, and try to make an impression on myself, and to come to some serious

resolution of improvement ;" or else " I have been covering up this bad fault for a long time, and I cannot get rid of it by covering it up. Indeed it haunts me the more for being so hidden. Whatever the consequence may be, I will make a clean breast to my father, or to one whom I can trust." And if you *have* so acted, you need no one to tell you that it was a wise act and a happy act.

And if you have not had the courage, you must surely be ashamed of that. If so, beware of living on in a state of mind ashamed of yourself. There is nothing more lowering, nothing more hardening, than the fear of some secret coming out and the endeavours to keep a firm bold front when our heart begins to beat fast at whatever we may fancy to be an indication of knowledge, or a clue to discovery.

I am not speaking of great sins which bring great sorrows and great punishments. But I speak only of what may be called the ordinary venial faults of daily life, when I urge you to treat them (as happily they can be treated) as the greatest to which you have been tempted ; and therefore to enter at once on a short, a brave, a manly repentance and amendment.

If the chief faults which trouble your conscience have been of an exceptional and rarely recurrent character, then at any rate they should alarm you with your capabilities of evil. If they are habitual and constant, it may reasonably alarm you with the sense of weakness to think that though you can speak of them as small and insignificant, *you* have not had at any rate sufficient strength yet to overcome them, while if your faults are mainly those of omission, I am not at all sure that they do not produce more bad results than any others. I have heard it well said that " if, of all the harm that is done in the world that part were set aside of which people could fairly say it was not intended, the residuum of deliberate evil which people had meant to do would be very small indeed." It would be equally true to say, that if we could divide all the sins that are done into two heaps, and place in one all those that were done with a high hand in spite of all that could

be said or done by the better-minded, and in the other, all those which never would have been done at all, if only the responsible and the thoughtful and the pure-minded had not been afraid of speaking at the right moment, the first heap of wilfully committed wrongs would be petty indeed, compared with the mighty pile of those which were in some sort due to the guilty feebleness of dissatisfied but timid lookers-on.

It is, I know, a delicate thing to profess to make others better. There is such a thing as unintelligent zeal. If you attack faults around you without modesty and judgment, you will make them worse; but this is not what I am urging you to do. I am urging you to make *yourself* better, and meantime not to do the insidious mischief you are doing by allowing others through your inconsistency to think worse of you than is true, to think you careless though you are thoughtful, and indifferent about what in your hearts you know and feel to be the noblest and the holiest and the best.

To find out for yourself that you have really been doing this great wrong to the cause of God, and then sincerely to repent in the sight of Him and the angels, and then to enter upon a newer life of firmer fibre and more lasting tissue, will be the best day's work of your whole life.

He whom Christendom commemorates to-day as one of the types of life and character which were first affected by our Lord's teaching and way of living, shows us among many other things this principally—namely, what a shock it caused him, energetic and resolute and loving as he was, to find that more than warning was necessary to save him from what he was capable of doing in an unguarded moment, from saying he did not know or care for Him whom he really did love most dearly, whom he had acknowledged sooner than any one, taught by the Father in Heaven Himself, to be the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Warning, we say, even to an Apostle, and to such an Apostle,—the distinct warning that it was in him to do even such a sin was not sufficient; Repentance alone could

make him strong for the future. Not that it was necessary that he should so fall in order that he might repent. Had he but used the warning in time, had he when it was first given resolutely inquired, "Where then in me is the weakness? What is the indulged habit? Where is the peccant traitor spot in this heart of mine? Instantly let me throw God's light on it and obtain God's strength," what an hour of agony would have been spared! How firmly he might have stood as a Friend and a Brave Man at the side of Christ upon His trial, instead of having for ever the bitter remembrance "He was despised and I denied Him!"

## SERMON XXI.

FRESH TO THE END.

1 CHRON. xxix. 18.

*"O Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people, and prepare their hearts unto thee: and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all, and to build the palace for which I have made provision."*

It has been well said "that in the complexity of the elements which form the character of David,—passion, tenderness, generosity, fierceness,—the soldier, the shepherd, the poet, the prophet, the king, the romantic friend, the chivalrous leader, the devoted father,—there is no character in the Old Testament to be compared with it."

In the first lesson of this morning's service has been read for the first time in the Sunday Lessons of our Church, one of the most beautiful illustrations of what David's character really was; how deep, how lasting in its most noble portion.

It was his last appearance in public in extreme old age. And it is marvellous to think how eyes and hearts must have been fastened upon him. The general loyalty to the aged king was consecrated by the thought that *this* king was of God's own choosing; that it was the sacred hand of Samuel, whose life had been now long mingled with the traditions of a past stage of society, which had poured the oil upon his head. The grey-bearded warriors at the head of the troops looked on him as the General who had led campaign after campaign, first on this border of the

country, then on that; who had never known a defeat; who had carried by assault the impregnable fortress in which he now reigned. The youngest and most ardent soldier in the forces could never look to perform such personal exploits as had fallen to his sling and sword. The tales of his prowess in the hunt carried the remembrance of his skill and courage back to his early boyhood.

But all these were tame stories and poor compared with other achievements. The musicians and the poets who charmed a susceptible people knew that his strains would resound for ages after theirs were hushed. The Counsellors who were neither few nor feeble confessed that it was "their Lord the king whose counsel was as an angel of God," that it was he who had tamed the wild tumult of stormy tribes into the united action of a great people. Even then they could see what at any rate we see, that the nation which David received from Saul and the nation which he was on the point of giving up to Solomon were like two different nations. We too in England had a great king who stood between the raging factions of the thirteenth and the formal magnificence of the fourteenth centuries and was a great warrior, and a pure and lofty character, yet when we place our greatest side by side with him the pre-eminence of David only comes out the more.

And then in that crowd which gathered about him on that day, how deeply were hearts moved as well as minds excited. The very Shepherd-boy exclaimed, "And he was once as humble and as laborious as I." Mothers and sons and fathers thought how he had risked a kingdom for a son's love, a disobedient son. The devoutest, most self-searching, holiest man in the assembly felt, as we feel, that when we have most penetrated into the spirit of that king's writing, then we are nearest God. In this last hour of greatest exaltation, in the hours of most splendid ceremonial, he did not detach from his splendid worship the strongest influence of conscience. While he is dedicating his wealth to the glory of the Temple he dwells not on ancient histories and new and sacred splendours; he says, "I

knew that thou triest the heart and hast pleasure in uprightness."

Sin he had known, and forgiveness he had known; and conquest and poesy and liturgy were but shadows beside this Truth of Truths, this Knowledge above all Knowledge. "And I *know* that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness."

Sincerity, Justice, that was the substance of his Life's Lesson.

And next I want to speak of the *Tone* in which he expressed this lesson. For the Tone of our minds is with many of us our great difficulty, and it is almost as important as our principles, if indeed we can altogether separate them.

There may be sincerity, but it may be spoiled by a tone of harshness; justice, but it may be hard: we may be doing our duty laboriously, yet we may be perpetually wishing God had given us or would give us some different duty or other kinds of people to deal with.

And different ages of our life bring different tones of mind with them. What is David's tone at the end of his reign—a different *régime* approaching, the infirmities of age on him with more than usual weight? There is not one of the mental clouds of old age visible. Never seemed he more elastic. Old age is not given to expense; rather to such economy as blames any expenditure which does not bring a return or is not visibly useful. But he is lavishing all his stores on an inordinately costly Building. He is encouraging all to do the same. "I have willingly offered all these things, and now have I seen with joy thy people which are found here to offer willingly unto thee." To be most liberal himself, to find others liberal, is the old prince's "joy."

Again, there is none of the fancy so usual to old age that the world is getting worse; that it will never be again as when we were young; that the decay of society is advancing. No; he believes that he is on the verge of a new era; that the world will be better than it has been for the good efforts that have been made. He has faith in his son

and in his people. To him he says, "Be strong and do it; God will not fail thee nor forsake thee," and to them he recommends him, "He is yet young and tender and the work is great."

Full of happiness, full of liberality, full of confidence. Is it not worth endless pains, real listening to conscience, the cultivation of every good feeling, to be able to look forward to an old age like that? And surely when temptation is so infinitely less, God's grace to us in Christ so far more copious and more near, we may keep ourselves stainless through the help of the Spirit that our age may also be free from the shadows of his remorse.

And now having touched on what David was, let us turn to what he designed.

He planned the erection of a Monument, as some would call it; a Temple so "exceeding magnifical," as he says, "that the fame thereof should be in all lands."

When we think of the Jewish Monarch, the Jewish Religion, the Jewish Captivity, the Jewish War, it is the idea of the Temple which rises first before us. When the land is to be anew explored, it is about the Temple that we want to hear first. We scarcely can conceive the altered colours and changed proportions in which the history of the people would appear to us, could we imagine them to have continued, as they began, without the Temple. We almost think that without it there could have been no history. And David in his prayer anticipates the central importance of it. For the nation he prays "that God would keep it for ever in their Imagination." And so He did. And for Solomon he prays God will give him a perfect heart in two ways: 1. To be ever obedient; 2. to build the Temple, "A perfect heart to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies and Thy statutes, and to do all, and to build the Palace," that is, the Temple.

David knew the transcendent importance to a human society of having always before them in good times and in bad, in darkness and in light, in trouble and in joy, some memorial imperishable, and beautiful, of their fathers and of their God.



This he held the Temple would be. "The Imagination of their thoughts" would fasten to it. It would make them remember God in heaven and God in earth ; God ever trying men's hearts and loving uprightness ; and God seen in the history of the world through ages and cycles of ages upholding the true and the right.

But David was far too wise a man to think that the noblest Monument has power of itself. We know well that the most magnificent trophies of ancestors may look down on degenerate slaves. And we need not think that David knew less of human hearts than we do. We know that the holiest shrines may see rapine and profanity raging round their pillars. And we need not think that David, who spoke about God's "breaking down the stronghold of his own sons, and overthrowing all the fences" of his descendants, had not a clear insight into this.

The glorious monument, the beautiful stones, the upward spire can give something for earnest God-fearing hearts to climb by. But they can give nothing at all to earthward, foolish, low-minded spirits. David does not pray that the Temple may keep God in people's hearts, but, knowing well the uses of the Temple, he prays that *God* will keep *It*, and the *building* of *It*, in their hearts, and he proceeds "and prepare their heart unto Thee."

The Temple can do nothing by itself. But God can make his people *with* the Temple, be far greater and nobler than ever they could be without it, and that is why God uses Temples and all such things in lifting man from the dust to the heavens.

How does that affect us? What is true of the Temple is true of all man's goodliest works. The whole framework of society may be admirably legislated, but the people must be full of the spirit of the legislation, or it will come to nought.

Perfect constitutions have been transplanted from one country to another, and though they embodied the best institutions, yet it soon became plain that they could not model an unwilling or an indifferent people. The institutions of a great legislator form a people, but the great

legislator himself can be no stranger ; he must be one in whom the best spirit of the race is almost (so to speak) incarnate. *Then* the institutions planted in congenial soil flourish and diffuse their influence.

David's joy was *not* that the Temple would be built among the people, but that the people offered *willingly*. There was the hope of its effect.

Any and every society in which institutions have sprung up must not use them as mere convenient tools, but must inspire them with their most earnest spirit, must look far too reverently on the work of their hands lightly to break it down, lightly to trifle with it. The regulation of daily life, which is good for the mass, must be not merely submitted to, but heartily worked by the individual. Orders exist in society not for the sake of the orders, but of the society. Public worship will do nothing of itself if the churches simply fill and empty and refill, as a bay, with the ebbing and flowing tide. Public officers are not merely to appear in their places and to transact formal business and depart to their own, leaving the world to take its chance otherwise, and expecting that Machinery will keep things in order.

If we desire to see the young grow up skilled, and thoughtful, and vigorous, we cannot give them just the letter of an education ; we cannot merely say, do this and do that, and just weigh and value their performances. In all things, great and small, living men must live with and for men, in the assurance that Life is the aim of God, not merely Order.

The Saviour of the world, Who saved it by His dying, did not merely come and die and go away. He made Himself one of us. He called Himself the Son of Man. He did not tell us how to live. He came and lived with some of us. Personal influence face to face one with another, not distant dealings with masses, not official communications, however laboriously considered, however systematically organised. These are good, necessary, most important, but they will not keep society pure and sweet, and true to itself. It may rear itself up in all the glory of the Temple,

and yet it will be profaned as soon as leaders begin to trust it instead of trusting themselves.

Our Lord also founded something for the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of His people to fasten on. He left something on earth which should be a visible Memorial of Himself. It was not indeed a building; it was not a magnificent rite. It was the partaking of a Certain Supper in common with twelve friends. Yet this in its simplicity, and the power of it, and the love of it, have created the fairest and most gorgeous temples all over the earth. The power and the love of it have produced the most soul-stirring rites. "The imagination of the thoughts of the heart" has been roused by it, and will be moved by it for ever in the deepest, mightiest way. By it God indeed "prepares men's hearts unto Himself."

But let us remember the universal lesson. It is not God's way to effect anything for souls or for societies by external means, not even of a divine nature. It is not God's way to put down some glorious work, powerful in operation, upon the ground, for men to gather round it, and be affected by it, and go away and be different men. The men must bring something there too. They must communicate something to each other. They must be in the practice of something.

And what is that? It is *Life*, the Life which God has given; they must stir up and they must present it to be fed into brighter, stronger life. Their intercourse with each other must be the practice of life. Brother to brother, friend to friend, must show—yes, it is not too much to say, he must *impart*—the life he lives by, for he will be imparting always, if he lives not indifferently, not carelessly as to the daily sins or sorrows that are round about him; but as he expects to mingle in the enjoyment of others, so also mingles in their duty. As he is earnest himself, so will he not veil his earnestness, but let it be seen. As he is sure that God takes delight in his service, so he remembers that God desires wise and affectionate service from all, and that if his indifference or coldness, or consulting of his own convenience, should mislead any

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one, the burden is as heavy as on the other hand the joy may well be great if his example makes but the least person more earnest in the least part of his duty.

Surely this is Love in Life. Life without this is Life without Love, and Life without Love will cease to be Life at all.

## SERMON XXII.

### AFTER REST.

MARK vi. 31.

*"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while."*

THE great horror which followed upon so base a crime as the murder of John Baptist, a crime which, as Josephus himself tells us, was, in general estimation, the last if not the greatest sin which drew down the vengeance of God upon the kingdom—the sense that his grand work of regenerating the masses, and inspiring them with one or two simple ideas which might lead them into higher and holier ways than they had fallen into, was finished abruptly—the feeling that there was a loud call for some one to step into his empty place—might have seemed perhaps to us to suggest, that his death was the very moment for our Lord and His disciples to step out, to denounce at once the tyrant himself and the sin and luxury of the upper classes, and, with the blood of the martyr before them, to commence a new cycle of preaching with a new prospect of success.

But not so our Lord thought. From what He said and did, which was so very different, even we, in such different times, and in such quiet walks of life as ours, may perhaps learn some lesson for to-day.

He received the news, and his only utterance seems to have been "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while." The teaching of nature, God's voice in the beauty of the wilderness, that seems to have been their

healing and their strength. The society of friends who loved the great past, and hoped for a greater future even amid the immediate wreck, that was to be their education under such a calamity, and their encouragement and assurance that God had left Himself still men and women to do His work in the world.

“Come ye yourselves into a desert place,” that is to say a quiet country, lonely so far as man’s dwellings are concerned, a retired and beautiful place such as are to be found many in number in what is called the wilderness of Judea. Come by yourselves into such a place and rest a while.

It was not a fanatic strife in the name of the murdered saint ; it was quiet and thought and conversation with each other, out of which the strength of the future was to flow.

The bidding would, while all obeyed it, awake different echoes in different hearts ; some perhaps would understand it as he meant it ; some would be only too willing to hide their sadness and their despair of anything good coming out of a land where the regenerators of society were marked for early doom, some in the sense of strength unused and courage unbroken would think (except that they trusted him) that they were losing time. Had he not seriously said to them that we must work while it is called day because of the approach of that night in which no work can be done ?

It is with feelings various as these that we look often on the Rest of Death ; some seem to reach such fulness of wisdom and sagacity, the rashness of youth gone, and yet its courage left, the inexperience to which all seemed easy succeeded by the experience which has learnt that difficulties abound almost impregnable unless approached by the one access to their citadel. Through the grief which oppressed them when attempts failed which they knew to be in a holy cause, and which they still think were not ill-directed, they have yet a faith that the science of attack on Satan’s fortresses is ever in advance, be it ever so little, of the skill with which they are defended. They have their ancient eagerness, yet it is an eagerness fenced in with quietude.

They see the moment come for some decisive step, and who so fit as they to take it?—And even then, then in the wisdom of God, though to our baffling, then is the moment when such men are taken from the world. Who can conceive why that is the very hour when God says to them, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while.”

We cannot realise the secret and the mystery of that place whither they go ; but they find there Christ and the Apostles still, resting a while until the day of their recommencing work arrive.

For it was but “a while.” They came back into the world, and for what? Was it not to feed the five thousand? To see His largest work of wonder, to be themselves His immediate ministers in carrying His grace to the poor people of the world just as they were fainting for lack of any food or help?

What the Apostles must have felt at retiring just when need was the sorest, this do men feel, and we feel for men, when they are taken away from their work at its height. Some lay down the burden of the flesh with a sorrowful willingness ; some not without wonder withdraw from the burden and heat they were willingly bearing.

It is to me a happy coincidence that just when I wished to speak to you on this subject, the name which this day bears in our calendar is one that more than any enforces this lesson of the need and the use of Rest—thoughtful, not idle Rest.

Just as the Decian persecution broke upon the church from without, just when all faults and sins seemed to be blazing up within which could possibly spoil God’s heritage, then the very man to whom all eyes looked as the most experienced, the most world-tried, and the most courageous of men, the man who would, as some supposed, stand forth and claim the martyr’s crown, and reanimate the church by his devotion, one who moved in the highest rank as a heathen orator and lawyer, who had just embraced Christianity with extraordinary fervour, and had been placed by the acclamation of the Christian world in the highest but one, and the

most effective of all positions ; one too who was expected now above all to show what contempt the Christian could pour on torture and on death,—he disappeared from the midst of his people and his enemies, disappeared in a night.

It was no want of courage ; a little later he refused the safest offers of refuge, and came forth from a secure retirement, and stepped to the bar and the block with the same serene look which had been his through life, when the moment was come at which he judged his death more useful than his life could be to his cause. But at the time we are speaking of he simply disappeared. He bore some obloquy at first, but that soon passed, for as letter after letter issued from his retirement, and as one stream of wealth after another came from his hand for the poor, as the clergy felt themselves checked, and the army of bishops beneath his sway received their directions, and the presumptuous were awed, and the weak strengthened, and undue claims quietly set aside, and a whole system organised by that absent head, and flooded with love by that tender heart, men began to feel and to know what may sometimes be the fruits of Retirement, and how the thoughts of the wilderness may be the strength of the city. We who trace back to him the great organisations, not of that country or of that century only, but of all those centuries which followed ; who, as churchmen, live still under the fragments of that system which he in his loneliness inaugurated, and which are surely destined ere long to be quickened with a new life, we may bless God surely on this St. Cyprian's Day for the uses and the lasting effects of Thoughtful Rest.

And surely, beloved, this is the lesson which we ought to bring back with us from our holidays, the Blessing of Rest, the lasting effects which such Rest may have for good if we will be holy and thoughtful.

Surely home and home friends cannot be revisited, cannot be lived with day by day ; we cannot for weeks together hear the voices, and look upon the eyes which to us bring back the happiest associations of childhood, and the remembrance of the first lessons of obedience and of prayers, and



of truth, and faith and knowledge of the Bible, without being in some degree wiser for eternity. These early recollections may indeed be sullied with the sad recollections of stubbornness or wilfulness or resistance, yet rising above and overpowering all these, surely comes the thought of that parentage and protection which is the best image of God's love, and of that brotherhood and sisterhood which is given us first to awaken our sympathies and wean us from ourselves; and whatever we lost through our own fault, surely we gained more than we lost, and as we look back on it we shall give earnest thanks to that Holy Spirit who has showed us that He will not cease to strive with us.

If that return which we have thus enjoyed to the best recollections of earlier life have been marked by any unworthy spirit, or by any selfishness on our part, let us put it away. Let loving words and good promise for an ever-rising, ever-aspiring future heal any bitter waters that may have risen to our condemnation.

But there is another use yet of our past holiday. One of the strongest and best results of that changefulness of life and scene which God has provided us in this world, viz., the opportunity for making a break-off of any evil habits which had beset us and clung to us before the change. To all who come newly to us this applies with great force, but no less to those who return after these weeks of change. No one can look back on any evil, whether it be profanity of any sort, or neglectfulness of prayers, or any sensual snare of any kind, or any breach of rule, or any idleness; no one can look *back* (however deceived he may have been at the time), no one can look *back* on such things with satisfaction. What fruit had ye then (asked St. Paul of new converts who may be tempted to relapse into old habits) in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? Can you point to any good whatever which came of them?

You have new opportunities now; companions are gone whom perhaps you tempted, or who, alas! may have been snares in your way, or if not, they too have like you had time for reflection; they too have enjoyed associations which kindle them as well as you with new resolutions

and brighter hopes. To make a new beginning in which they can exert on you, and you on them, an elevating and stimulating, and not a depressing influence, is more feasible than when a few weeks ago day came after day unbrokenly with trials and temptations like those of the day before.

And many of you have the privilege of not only resolving, but of sealing your resolutions with the Sacrament of the Supper. While you are younger it is withheld not because your obligations are less solemn than ours to do all the good you know to do, and to overcome all the evil, but because for all privileges a time of probation is required, and before you receive the Divine Gift for the valuing and using of which you will be responsible, it is only just to you and kind to you that you should be allowed a period for learning to know your own heart. God will not give you meanwhile less strength than you require. He will give all you need in other ways, even while He withholds His greatest gift of all for a short time.

To you too He seems to say, "Rest a while. Count over God's mercies. Give heed to your own shortcomings, learn humility, and then you will be able to appreciate what is the power of My Grace."

To us, Beloved Friends, Fellow Communicants, He seems to say this hour with a deep meaning which none of us can miss, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place," away from the many, alone with the few, alone with Me, and let not your work-day world engross you. Rest a while in My love, that even in that work-day world you may be Mine.

## SERMON XXIII.

### NO ONE ELSE CAN DO OUR DUTY.

EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES, i. 22.

*“Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”*

ST. JAMES is here speaking to some persons who had not the least intention of deceiving others by an affectation of religion, and who were probably as far as possible from having anything of hypocrisy about them. Their religious feeling was sincere, I doubt not, and a comfort to them. It is plain from the very words that they read or heard such Scriptures as they had, and we know well that in those days they could not do so without having something to suffer for it—if nothing else, at least coldness, exclusion, and some worldly loss.

The fault which St. James finds in them is not irreligion or indifference; not acting a part or trying to deceive others; but allowing their performance to lag behind their knowledge, and so deceiving themselves.

Any one who knows well his duty from his Bible, from his friends, or from that light within which is his conscience, and who thus knowing his duty, does not (I must not say *succeed* in doing) his duty up to that standard, but who is not always trying to do his work in life as well as he can, falls under this sharp rebuke. He would be told by St. James that he is a self-deceiver. It would be to no purpose that he would reply, “There is a great deal of my work in which I take a lively interest, and I do it

thoroughly." "There is a great deal of my duty which is far from pleasant to me, but I go through with it as well as I can." So long as he is conscious that there is *something* in which he gives himself up to be led by his inclinations instead of by God's law sounded in his ears; that there are temptations in the way of which he places himself when he might keep out of them, although at present he has no distinct idea of yielding to them; that there are sections of his duty which he passes over cursorily, carelessly, not caring how he does them, but only glad the time appointed for them is over; so long St. James's words apply to him in the way of warning, and in the way of encouragement. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." They are a warning, for that must be a foolish heart which can with indifference hear its own case so accurately described. They are an encouragement, for they are an assurance to him that he need not give himself up in despair as either too weak, or too long time a sinner, to make a complete change. They assure him that if he will exert his will he may be strong, and if he will use his strength, he may do that which he has at present only heard of.

These encouragements seem to flow naturally, not only from the Epistle we just now read, but also from the happy concurrence of the Commemoration of the Great Man, whose memory is here enshrined by a grateful nation, with the Festival of Two Apostles, whose names are, by the Epistle of to-day, and by the Epistle and Gospel of that First of May, connected with words which are the Christian's Watch-light and Watch-word.

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," was the at once dread Revelation and joyous assurance which our Lord gave to St. Philip. St. Philip knew, revered, had been carefully taught by our Lord—but so long as Philip knew Him only as the divinest of human teachers, he was obliged to declare that he did not know the way to God. God is so far away, so holy, so just, that knowledge alone, and even an instructed conscience, could not bring man to God; could not perpetuate man's life immortally, could

not bridge the gulf which sin had rent open. "We do not, cannot know the way," was St. Philip's most touching confession of his own case, and that of his brethren, and fellow-men. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," was the soul-healing, sin-destroying, Light- and Life-giving comfort, with which the Son of God answered him.

And St. Philip's thoughts as the truth sank into his soul, and he saw more than he had yet done of God's mercy to Man shown not far off in distant ages but shown now, cannot have been very remote from the beautiful collect with which the Church welcomes the words and takes them home to her—"Grant us perfectly to know—(yes! perfectly, for how imperfectly does our best faith know it still)—perfectly to know thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that we may stedfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life."

"Know the way, and stedfastly walk in the way we know." These words "Stedfastly Walk," seem to me a most happy concurrent motto for the memory which must and ought to mingle with our highest thoughts this day. For Stedfastness in walking the Way he knew was (as well you are or should be aware) the characteristic of our Great Duke's resolution, which impressed itself on men as much as his genius.

To do his duty irrespectively of his inclinations, to go straight to that mark, with no eye for things that lay right or left of it, was what won for him an amount of faithful adherence, and a respect from his enemies which prevented them continually from stirring hand or foot against him. It was his Love of Duty, we can see now, which gave fair play to his Genius, though he never thought of it in that view. And those who have not his genius, or no genius at all, will constantly find themselves impregnable to every assault from without, and every wrong inducement from within, if both to others and to themselves they make known what he in the simplest way let all men know; that the first thing he thought of in any question was the line in which his duty lay, and when that was found "he stedfastly walked in it." To think of a character like this,

and to think how we have been brought within the shadow of it, ought to be of use to every one of us. It might well have happened that some hero's fame might be perpetuated thus, about whom very different associations clung—or at best they might have been of a limited and narrow kind,—good, perhaps, but narrowed to some one pursuit or one profession. But this watchword of Duty is the practical summing up of Christian Life in all its contacts with the world. “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,”—that was the way in which he measured every man. He cared little for the most brilliant strokes, the most careful schemes, if they lay out of the path of Duty. His own schemes were careful with a minuteness that put the secluded student to shame. His own strokes were so brilliant, and at times so sudden, that his eye seemed to sweep to its most distant horizon the field of possibilities in a moment; but he knew that in the long run the line of duty was the only sure one. Much he rejected, much he sacrificed for it, and the end proved that he was right.

So true it is that in those other words of St. James, which we also read last Sunday, “Every good gift and every perfect gift”—(yes, the genius of the soldier, the historian, the poet, the exactitude of the scholar, the skill of the mathematician)—“every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.” And what is that Father of Lights? He too is what He desires His children to be, “without variableness, without shadow of turning.” And so, to close our quotations from St. James with the words of the Epistle of the First of May: “Let patience have her perfect work,” that is in carrying out our Duty. “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.”

And now, let me ask you lastly to consider one or two things which may help some of us to do our duty better, and encourage us to avoid both our weaknesses and our temptations:—

1. First, we ought each of us to have a proper idea of the

importance of our work. I do not mean its importance to our own selves only. That is a proper topic enough, but it is usually quite enough insisted on. And I think that it is very often an ineffective motive to urge upon the very young, because it would require a good deal of penetration, or else something of sad experience, for a young boy to be able to realise how much his interests are wrapped up for his whole life in his doing his school-work well, and gaining ideas from books, and generally being very careful of his time. His further interests are, we know, wrapped up really in his present, as much as the petals of a flower are all inclosed in its bud, but as a child is scarcely able to see that, it conveys little idea of the fact to him to tell him so.

But there is no one who is not quite able to see when it is pointed out to him, that he is a part of a whole—a part of a connected whole. His life is not like a grain of sand on a shore. Other lives have preceded his, other lives are bound up in his; his conduct and character are acting upon others; those who are interested in him, who love him, who are friends with him, work with him, play with him, idle with him, or—far better things perhaps which I need not name—each of those who are connected with him, are connected with them too, and influence them. And this is the way that human life goes on—not as I said like grains of sand, but like meshes in a fabric, each one mesh touching and holding in his place four or five, and each of those four or five others. So that if we may say so, the world's life may be compared to a coat of chain armour, and every one of us is a mesh or link in it. Well, now you know that, if the least mesh or link breaks, it sets loose four or five others, and these four or five others all lack the support they ought to have on that one side, and throw an undue weight on each of the meshes they hang upon; and then comes some stress on that particular point, or else a general stretching of the whole; one link fails, and others cannot take the additional strain, and then there is an opening for a wound, or a general tearing. The safety is gone, and that is what comes of an unfaithful,

failing link. In the same way a society may be imperilled by the failure in duty of one member.

I beg you therefore to consider the importance of your own life—the importance of your own work, of your own conduct, not as affecting your future, but just because you are placed by God to be a member of a Family, of a school, of a neighbourhood, of a nation, of a church—an importance which belongs to you, as soon as ever you are a member of any of these, and grows in importance as you grow in age and in power. •

There is another way in which you may see how important it is that you should fulfil your duty rightly. God Himself, working through many means, gave you your position and your being. Does God concern Himself with unimportant things? Has He set in movement all the chains of circumstances which brought you where you are for nothing? It is not as if He had just thrown you, you know not how, in a desert land. You could not be where you are, but for endless combinations which our convictions fasten on, as having been made in God's providence for you. They are brought to bear on you from distant times and places. Can it be of little moment how you use what God has thus marvellously arranged? Naturalists have shown us the extraordinary import which attaches to any simple plant, or animal, or insect; how its existence affects that of another, and so that of a third, and through that many more, so that there is not the most insignificant creature which has not its peculiar function to fulfil in the arrangement of physical nature. It is exactly what our Lord taught us: "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father; and you—you are of more value than many sparrows, for even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

Think, then, that God calls us to fill a specially appointed place, to do some duty and work in life which no one else could do, because no one else is set to do it, as a part of God's plan,—which will go unfulfilled if we are unfaithful.

Consider too that, if this be so, there can be no ground



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for the complaint which we hear sometimes that we are not equal to ~~that~~ which is given us to do—that therefore others may be called to noble life, but we are overmuch hindered in ours.

It is not so. God who gave the place and gave the work, calculated also the powers which were given to do it ; and if we will realise that, we shall find we have energy for what He requires ; we shall find no time left for trifling, but we shall find no room for discontent.

## BOOK II.



## SERMON I.

### THE TROPHY OF THE BOY.

1 SAM. xxi. 8.

*"And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.*

*"And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me."*

THE Token of the Victories of Youth. There is nothing like that—no such talisman, no such weapon as that to be worn or wielded—no marvel that David rejoices to hear it is within reach.

Years ago he had overthrown the Philistine Champion, and with this Giant sword had finished his achievement, and the burden of the Songs of Israel had been for a while that David in that one stroke had slain his tens of thousands. But David has had a sorrowful life, and become an unhappy man since then—as the faithful, patient attendant of a jealous and reckless prince, with whom his life was never safe. The hero of the hour must have felt for many a long year that the exploit, though he had been nerved to it by the power of faith, and had stood forth the champion of the true against the false, had condemned him after all to many a fear, many a reproach, many a loss.

And now at last he has been hunted out of the King's House. His life is not his own for an hour. "Like a partridge in the mountains," as he says himself, with rapid

flights, with hasty pause, homeless and restless, he sees his life before him.

The last of the houses of Israel which he would enter for a long time to come, was the sacred house of the Ark and of the priest. He bids farewell to it before he turns his steps quite away.

By a fugitive's artifice he obtains even bread to eat ; by another he persuades the priest to give him a sword. But in the quiet priestly house there is no sword, but one, one which has been dedicated these years back as a relic—a remembrance of one of God's great deliverances ; it has been laid up in the nation's sanctuary, never to be used again ; it now lies behind the sacred robe of divination. It was indeed a trophy, David's own, won in fair fight, and wrapped still in the bloodstained cloak of him who lost it.

"Give it me, there is none like that." Good sword and true, it was more to David than to any other master.

As in a parable, this story seems to illustrate something which we would fain have to come within the experience of us all.

The close of a more chequered term than usual—the close of another school year, and the departure of some of those who have been longest among you, brings many thoughts to your minds. Among many such thoughts I would choose to dwell on this, how well the memory of the Victories of Youth serves in our spiritual Life, and takes its place side by side with motives which are our best and deepest, and thence I would pray you elders to keep alive such Memories—and others I would pray to determine beforehand that their school memories shall be of victory.

It matters not that at present you little realise it ; that hope rather than memory seems natural to you now. But indeed we can any of us move but a very little space away from any complete epoch of our lives when its history begins to assume a unity of which we are unconscious while it passes.

The actors in it group themselves strangely together ; we feel that we have had a real unity with those between whom and ourselves we at the time felt rather the lines of

difference. The scenes compress themselves, as it were, within a frame ; we stand outside it, and look as upon some great mirror. We behold the outlines of ourselves as if we were some different persons ; we recognise our own mistakes, aims, and advances, in clearer form ; and then the thought "It is I" who lived thus and thus ; "I too, then, may be looked at and estimated from the outside," begins with new force to help or to hinder.

This state of feeling which ensues after each of the few complete epochs which there are in most lives, will begin for some of you soon, when you look back upon your school lives as a whole.

The clearness with which we see the past, so picture-like, puts us in the best condition to make new efforts to master failings, or battle with rising temptations ; and the sight of old efforts, needless former failures, past divine successes, gives the firmer resolution a more living hope for the new unfolding scene.

Some men seem to throw away the Memory of Youth ; as if they thought the youth's struggles, the youth's conquests less than the man's. They are far greater. The powers of the youth are fresher, his will commonly more effective. His trials differ only in this, that they are simpler—I mean not easier, but more unmixed, less involved and complicated with sideways issues, and this is the reason that the consequences of youthful misdoings are so much more grievous. The consequences of a man's misdoing may be temporary but the consequences of a boy's misdeed change or tinge his whole life and character.

The sloth of a year or two, sometimes of a month or two, in boyhood alters (such is human life) our whole career ; a single good or a single bad habit opens or closes to us the door of honour. In the secret of our hearts, such a single bad habit of a few months will work into the very soul some deep subtle untruthfulness of speech or thought, or some baseness unknown to the world, unguessed by the dearest friend, but one at which we inwardly groan and chafe, perhaps for years, in vain.

All this is because of the intense vital force, the immense

growing power of our spirits in youth. See with what an energy they receive and embrace that which attracts them. The thought, the desire that glows before them, how fast they embody it, and for good or for ill incorporate it—we ought rather to say *ensoul* it—into themselves as a fixed principle. As age advances the will moves more slowly, grasps less firmly, resigns more easily.

But in youth, that which one day was a temptation external to us, is the next an inalienable part of our being ; we shall die (if it is holy) before we part with its goodness, we shall die (if it is bad) before we are rid of its stain.

On the other hand, those who find a good habit so easy, so natural to them, that they can scarcely now understand its being less so to others—that they cannot find words to argue in favour of what is to them so obvious—I am sure that they will often recollect the very hour when it was begun, the very words which suggested, the very thoughts which induced it.

Not weakness, but strength is the attribute of youth ; not effort, but victory ought to be its aim. If we see now and then one who from over-confidence is sure to fail, how many do we see who only, wholly, solely, fail because they will not use the strength they have. Who say, “I will try,” when what they should say is, “By God’s help I will do it.”

What is it that St. John seizes as the characteristic of your time of life? Is it not strength and victory? To the fathers and to the old men and to the little children he writes, because knowledge and innocence are theirs—but to the young men he says, “I write unto you, because ye have overcome the wicked one,” and again, “I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong.”

Take, then, good care of such Memories as you have, or may have from your life here. Let them not slip away. Lay them up in a sacred place. In the time of need, of fear, of vexation, of weariness, you will come upon them and find them ready to your hand, and “none like them.”

This sword was to David (1) the Token of a good deed which he had done in singleness of heart ; (2) it was the

Token of God's certain help in answer to faith ; (3) it was the Memory of a great danger past. And for all these associations' sake, it was a pledge which he might well desire to carry with him out from the court and camp and cities of Israel forth into his wilderness life.

(1.) The thought of a good deed done in singleness of spirit lies at the heart as the warmest of God's comforts. If there has been with any of those with whom you lived any evil against which you have set your faces, happy are ye. There are many evils which come on so quietly that at first we are not sure whether they are altogether evil. They seem so natural ; we know how the little hesitation of some in whom we had confidence was overcome ; or how their little courage was daunted as it came ; how the many began to murmur, " Were it not better to yield betimes ? to make good terms ? to be quiet servants to the stranger ? rather than half starved, half armed, ailing, languid opponents ? "

Ah ! at the approach of such an evil prompting, there is nothing to do but to follow the first instinct. Strike, strike with the most unpretentious weapon. When it is fallen you will see it as it is ; not a majestic or heroic human thing, proportioned to the needs and happiness of life, and the harmony of true sweet society, but monstrous and abnormal. Yet now perhaps with a magic beyond the Philistine—for all about *him* was hard, cold, cruel—it poisons the air as it approaches : like the poet's enchanter—

" It hurls  
Some dazzling spell into the spongy air  
Of power to cheat the eye with bleat illusion,  
And give it false presentment."

Sin swims like a haze before you ; coloured shapes of pleasure, ease, gain, success, attend your enemy. It seems at times perhaps as if he might serve you well ere you discard him : that even if you serve him, his usages are convenient.

But what is the thing really which tempts you ? How will it look when it is dead ? How, in after years, will its memory haunt you ? Will you then see it was some habit



of virtual untruth which dishonoured a wide circle of friends? Some acted deceit? Some premeditated disingenuousness? Some popular coarseness, some disobedience voted legitimate? some self-indulgence, unkindliness? Then there is nothing for it but to strike at once.

Forty days the Philistine drew near, morning and evening, and presented himself. What lay before Israel, if the boy-champion had not arrived, was to be the servant of the enemy and serve them. Yet no one stirred. But David's spirit had not been overpowered. His instinct was not to watch till the fascination of fear had overcome him as it did the other warriors. It was to strike: to strike with the simple weapon he was used to; and lo! the terror was gone. Yes: our solitary souls as well as the Great World are such a battlefield. The struggle is daily renewed. Two principles within, one godless and defying; one whose eyes are lit with the eternal light. Sin will overcome faith, or faith will slay sin. And each Memory of each Victory of Faith is a strength in itself.

(2.) And then again, to look back on the signs of God's ready help: old answers to prayer when we were in trouble; the expected strength which did not disappoint us, but was with us in some great trial; the clearness with which we can now see that some loss, some disappointment, was good; the visible trace of God's preparation of us and of the work meant for us; the admiration with which we watch how God's great laws leave not out of sight the least of our souls, the most insignificant of our lives, the most ordinary of our circumstances; the marvel of that great Vision, and the full cups of Life and Death, of good and evil, set again and again before men—one chosen, the other refused; our human conviction of the sure requital of evil; our experience of that terrible Justice which we see go working itself out in the lives of men and in the lives of nations. All this and more brings closer and better home to us the sense of God's presence and the sense of God's help, until, whatever else may be uncertain to us, of this we are most sure, that all things work together for good to them that fear Him.

But above all sources of strength, the Memory of a great Danger past, a sin faced and mastered by such help of God, is the most fruitful. "He hath delivered, yea, and doth deliver," is our voice, when our hearts "meditate" past "terrors." A terror taken possession of; the assurance that it will terrify us no more: this is what God gives to good men in the evening of life.

At present, we know, we cannot be so confident. No trial we have yet had is so utterly past that it can never return: we must not think that yet. But this blessing will come at last like others; and we may know before we die that we have kept the faith and finished our course.

One thing, however, as to Memories of the Past is very needful to know. There are some thoughts, some events, which are better forgotten; even sins which are better forgotten; not preserved even to repent of, but utterly thrown away. Some sins even in repentance have an enfeebling power; any thought of them revives them, and their revival is fraught with despondency. Therefore forget wisely, as well as remember.

And, lastly, let me say that while you live you will have one Memory of this place, one lasting token which will meet and greet you everywhere, and which to him who has received his Confirmation and first Communion within these walls will never fail to bring back the thought of the Holy Communions of Boyhood.

The remembrance of the early Repentance, the strong Resolutions, the expanding Character, will be ever knit up with the thought of the Holy times when you have knelt together before God's altar.

This memory of School Communions, this token of the Victories of Youth, is according to the fair old eastern metaphor,—as "the Pearl of Life" upon your soul's brow, a pearl which Sunday by Sunday you cannot help looking on.

Yes, though now we may be sometimes too impatient for a faster coming strength to be able to feel what a part Worship and Communion have in our lives, though it may

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be good for us for a time that this should be hidden from us, lest we should either despair at finding ourselves still weak, or should be bold with a too-untried strength, at last the veiled strength will be seen in its formation and in its channels, and we shall say year after year with deeper truth—"There is no Token like That ; give it me."

## SERMON II.

### THE PSALMIST OF THE WORD.

#### PSALM cxix. 1.

*“Blessed are they that are undefiled in the way and walk in the Law of the Lord.”*

THIS is the first verse and this the theme which runs through all the verses of the longest of all the Psalms. The Psalm which serves for no less than five of our services, and of which the simple, natural words (with perhaps for us the sweet chants to which we sing them here) are sure to come echoing back to us in years to come.

Perhaps no one can have helped observing that in every verse (except one) there is mention made of the “Word of God” under one name or other. The Psalm is in praise of that Word, of its goodness and of its usefulness to us, as the one thing, the study of which, and obedience to which, is powerful to elevate us; to cultivate the wisest, to improve the simplest; to make both wise and simple men happy.

We shall have been surprised perhaps at the immense variety with which this thought is dressed, as the holiness and the happiness of studying it are set forth.

For there is no laboured description (admitting of many words) of the subject itself. That is called only by some simple name with never even an epithet. Let us first mention the names used, and then we shall be free to speak more of the writer and his purpose and his style. Nine

names are used, and nine only. Either it is the "Word" or "Utterance of God;" or else His "Word," in the sense in which we talk of giving our "Word," as an oral promise; or else it is the "Law," that is, the Code; or the "Testimonies," that is, the Covenant or Agreement; or the "Precepts" or "Statutes," the Rule which we are charged to observe, or the express words of the Charge; or the "Commandments," a term bidding us remember the authority of the Giver; or the "Judgments," a word applying specially to the universally accepted dicta of social life; or, ninthly, it is called by the simplest term of all, the "Way of God."

The subject, then, is the Simplicity, the Truth, the Righteousness, the Strength, the Permanence of that which God has said and shown to our ears and hearts, and that which He says and shows every day.

And who then is the Writer? When we look into this a little carefully we find some very clear notes of him and of his place and life. (1) First of all he lived among people who persecuted him and tried to make him unhappy. He speaks of having many persecutors, and some of high rank, "princes:" "Princes have persecuted me without a cause;" "Princes did sit and speak against me." They did it by accusing him falsely to some one. "They have imagined a lie against me;" "they persecute me falsely." He has to defend himself before some king; "I will speak of thy testimonies even before kings." He was in trouble when he wrote, probably in captivity, for so the best scholars interpret his expression, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage," and he prays, "deliver me according to thy word," and again, "let thine hand help me." He had already suffered loss, he says, "they had robbed him." He had suffered in health: "He was shrunken and old before his time." There was some plot laid against him which he was aware of, "They have laid a snare for me," and he did not even yet know that his life was safe, "My soul is always in my hand." He had no means of helping himself except by faith in God. His enemies were in a position from which they could look

down on him. He speaks of having been "held exceedingly in derision."

Again (2) he tells us something of his habits of life. He by no means praises himself as a just or perfect man. All he claims is, that he does sincerely love God's Word, but as to his own character he says that he has had to "acknowledge his ways," i.e. to confess himself for sin to God. He desires more perfect truthfulness: "Take from me the way of lying." He knows the danger of wandering eyes: "Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity." To be perfectly sincere he does earnestly desire, "Let my spirit be sound, that I be not ashamed." But when he looks on his past life he can only say, "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost." "O seek thy servant," not because he deserves it and has never fallen, but, setting aside all merit, there is through God's grace one thing left him—just one, "that he does not forget the Commandments."

Such a person is he, with such sense of failure in his life, and such an estimate of what he had been able to do; difficulties that have been almost too much for him, very little if anything effected. Even God's Word, though he loves it so much, is not able to enlighten for him all things in Heaven and Earth.

The author of the Nineteenth Psalm speaks of the Word very differently, as being to him like the sun flooding all the world with light and glory. But the writer of the Hundred and Nineteenth only finds just light for himself and his guidance, no more. "Thy Word," he says, "is a lantern unto my feet, a light unto my path." The world is very dark to me, but there is something which just makes a light place before me, so that step after step I can tread safely. I do not profess to understand all things, but I can see what my immediate duty is.

And another thing we learn about his habits, and that is, that he was very prayerful. He says that it was his troubles first of all which brought him to God: "Before I was troubled I went wrong;" "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I might learn thy statutes." But having once come to God he holds His hand fast, not only

going to God in a great difficulty, but being exact and constant in praying. "Early in the morning," he prayed, he says ; and again, "Mine eyes prevent the night watches." He rose to pray in the night, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks ;" and again, "I have thought upon thy name in the night season." And then he says, "Seven times a day," that is, in Hebrew phrase, "Continually do I praise thee."

(3) Now, thirdly, why was one so holy also so anxious? Why was he not loftier and bolder in spirit? Why did his constant prayers not succeed in giving him fresh confidence? Why did he not say, like some of the other psalmists, "I will not fear what man can do unto me"? The answer to this lies, I think, in the third point I notice.

He was very young. One of the first verses is the inquiry, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" And when he has answered his own question in the words, "Even by ruling himself after thy word," he says, "With my whole heart have I sought thee, oh let me not go wrong." That is his resolve as a young man, and his prayer. Then he says again, "I am wiser than the aged"—simply because he obeys God. And again, by reading God's Word continually, "he gains more understanding than his teachers;" from which we should infer the same. And still more distinctively, "I am small and of no reputation."

And again, I think the idea is borne out by the tone of many of the verses. The Spirit of Freedom, the longing for Liberty, which he has, all seem to mark the young view of life ; but of this point I will speak presently.

Now some have thought that this Psalm exceedingly well suits the character of Nehemiah, his difficult position and his deep devotion to the Word of God. And they point out the singular fact that the word "comfort" is in Hebrew almost the same as Nehemiah, and that it is used oftener in this Psalm than in all the others together.

Still, the *Feeling* of this Psalm is to me very different from what I read in Nehemiah. The style of Nehemiah's writing is very peculiar, and his prayers are marked by one

or two fixed and striking phrases which we should expect to recur in so long a composition, if it were his, but which do not.

And when we think of some one living in the Captivity, falsely accused by princes, before a king, in danger of life, very constant in prayers, and very young, there is *only* one person, and that is Daniel, whom this description seems to suit. But I do not think we are called upon to find the author among the heroes of the Bible, and probabilities are much against his being one who is elsewhere described.

But we have not yet done with the outer form of this Psalm. Some of you probably know that it is an Alphabetical or Acrostic Psalm. Its divisions into portions of eight verses are not made arbitrarily. Each set of eight verses has every line of the eight beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. The first eight all beginning with A, the second eight all with B, and so on through the twenty-two letters. The Bible version marks them so.

It is easily, hastily, said that an arrangement so different from ours is artificial, and must constrain the writer and make his diction stiff. But if any one will consider how much more numerous are the sounds which terminate words than the letters which begin them, he will see how far fewer words can have the same ending in sounds than can have the same initial letter. Rhymes which we do not consider to fetter the genius of a poet unduly are, so far as the mere point of constraint goes, ten times over as confining. Attempts which have been made to give the acrostic effect of this Psalm in English are indeed stiff and awkward and constrained; but that is due to our want of practice and skill. But if the constraint were real it would appear in *any* translation. The effect of a literal translation of forced unnatural diction, is of course more forced and unnatural than the original. The rhyme, rhythm, or recurrences, which softened it being gone, the harshness of the words is more palpable. But let any candid person ask himself whether he ever suspected that the hundred and eleventh or hundred and twelfth Psalms—Psalms which for their exultant stream of glorious expression were



selected by the Western Church for the Sunday Evening Vespers—are acrostic? Or that the hundred and forty-fifth Psalm, “I will magnify thee, O God my King, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever,” is alphabetical?

Or the twenty-fifth Psalm—that which one of the haughtiest and boldest of English statesmen chose for his death-Psalm at the block. Take the words, “O remember not the sins and offences of my youth, but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness. Gracious and righteous is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way. Them that are meek shall he guide in judgment; and such as are gentle, them shall he learn his way.” Will any of us (who may have perhaps worked the words many a time and oft into his own prayers) allow that there is anything of undue constraint in that majestic yet tender music, in that heartsearching prayer?

Or the thirty-fourth Psalm—What but a preconceived fancy will speak of stiffness in words which have been the motto of so many a household. “The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

So again, when it is asserted that the alphabetical arrangement marks the decline of poetic power, and that it is “impossible to conceive an early poet selecting an arrangement which hinders the flow of thought and language, and often necessitates repetition of ideas,” we not only controvert the fact by pointing to such Psalms as these I have quoted, but we ask whether the writer knows that the father of Latin Poetry himself uttered the earliest, the only genuine bursts of native Italian genius, in the selfsame form?

But let us leave the shape, and turn to the subject, and let us say to ourselves that if the Old Law, the Old Histories, with two or three Prophets at the most, were sufficient to inspire such ardent feeling, to give such strength, to awake such love, then we who possess not only the Old Testament but the New, to whom the life of the Son of God is an open volume, to us the words of the

Psalmist should come with fuller force than he could possibly feel in them. He felt all that he could feel, but we can feel more.

He prayed, "Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of thy law." But our eyes have seen, our hearts have known, the many things which he with many other prophets and kings desired to see but could not see. And yet the prayer is ours, and yet there are mysteries which we should desire to look into.

He said, "I have promised to keep thy law;" he said, "I have sworn and am stedfastly purposed to keep thy righteous judgments." But we, we have promised and sworn indeed, and have had the washing away of sins given us, and have had the cross traced upon our foreheads, in token that we will ever confess him and keep his ways.

"Blessed are they that are undefiled in the Way," he would say even then. But how far more blessed are we, as our way is higher, nearer to God.

He knew how all-important it was that we should begin as soon as we are called. "I made haste, and prolonged not the time to keep thy commandments." He knew that we should not offend our consciences and make them callous by indulging the least act of sin. He knew that those who sin because it is pleasant will deny God and be ashamed of their Lord, because to bear His reproach is disagreeable. Therefore he knew that we must grow by degrees into union with Him. Therefore it is that he is so earnest that he may grow sufficiently in grace "not to be confounded," "not to be ashamed," "not to be disappointed," "to be held up," "to be established," "to be led."

He was well aware the Word was not without its difficulties, and could not be; that there were things in it which might fairly be discussed. Of these dark places he says that the perfection of the whole must for a while suffice us, and will do so in spite of impatient and fretful spirits who will dwell only on the spot that tries them. "Great peace have they who love thy law, and they are not offended at it."

He is not fretted, for he knows the Word will last long

enough to answer any questions which may be asked of it or about it. "Thy word endureth for ever in Heaven." And so must its lovers be patient and persevering. "I have stuck unto thy testimonies." And after describing his own joyfulness, he sets it all down as the fruit, not of the first ardour of enthusiasm, but of the steady adherence to rule, "This I had, because I kept thy commandments."

He knew the value of good friends, friends to whom one can talk of truth and right: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee." They make him welcome: "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me." He makes it a matter of prayer that he may become friends with the friends of God: "Let such as fear thee and have known thy testimonies be turned unto me."

But he is not concerned with his own salvation only. He rises to the true spirit of a Christian. It is grievous to him, with a sorrow which he cannot express, to know and see those among whom he lives, even his own personal enemies, separating themselves from truth and light and love. "I am horribly afraid for the ungodly that forsake thy law." "Mine eyes gush out with water because men keep not thy law." He is not afraid for himself; he does not weep for himself; fear and tears are for them only.

In full accord with this we find that it is not the letter of the law but the spirit at which he aims. No two forms of thought could be more dissimilar than the way in which the Pharisee was "zealous for the law," and the way in which the Psalmist's zeal consumed him; to him it is not a law of restraint, but a life of liberty; not a system of regulations, of observances, of minutiae, of scruples, but a storehouse of principles, a fountain of lovingness, a spirit of union with God; to be free from sin, to die as it were to sin, and live to righteousness, this is what he desires: "I will walk at liberty," he says, "for I seek thy commandments," and conversely, "I will run the way of thy commandments"—when? When I have raised my heart to them? No, "When thou hast set my heart at liberty, so that it can follow its own nature."

Again, is it natural laws, is it human thoughts, that are the widest and the most comprehensive facts of which religion is a true part, but only a part? No! understand religion in its largeness, understand it as it is, and all nature and all natural truth and all wisdom that man may have, are but parts of that true, all-embracing knowledge of God: for "I see that all things come to an end, but thy commandment is exceedingly broad."

Iron systems of criticism, literary and historical, have either found the Psalm full of difficulties, or have ignored them. At best they attempt to defend its acrostic character by looking upon it as an aid to memory, whereas it really depends on the same symmetrical love of recurrences and intervals as our own poems do, only after an Eastern not after a Western form. And some have called the Psalm the product of a "Hierarchical spirit intent on getting up and preserving national records and antiquities." On the contrary, there is not one allusion to a king, or a custom, or a sacrifice, or any single observance. Some have called it a National Psalm, as if the speaker all through was meant to be the Jewish Nation, whereas nothing can be more personal. Witness the frequent touches as to the false accusation, and as to the youth of the speaker and as to his friends. Some have even fancied it a Processional Psalm; but what more unfit for the pomp of a public scene than the complaints of broken health, and enemies, and the difficulties in the way of holy life?

I would not now trouble you with such frigid, frozen schemes but that the style of them is so prevalent, and that they rest on great names, and seem interesting, and are acceptable to us, if we would rather read about the Bible than read the Bible itself. For this is really the moral of the whole matter, that if we would know anything well, and understand it, and not be filled with ungrounded fancies, we should read it, as we read any other book, pencil in hand, because it is the language of men; and think of it as we think of no other book, because it is the Word of God, and pray that we may understand and grow by it. And as we learn other languages and other styles, each for its own

use, so make the Bible our own because it is the most perfect expression, not only of God's thoughts towards us, but the only adequate expression of the movements of our human heart, the heart of the race and the heart of the individual towards Him.

If we would read in such a spirit, we should be in no danger of misunderstanding or undervaluing even those parts of Scripture which at the first surface-glance seem to have less to say to us. In such a spirit, candid and simple, I do not believe it would be possible to make such mistakes as I have mentioned. Rather we should feel with the pure-spirited student who spoke of this Psalm as a "continual solace," or with the great mathematician Pascal, the most acute and the most honest mind in France, the strictest reasoner and the most devoted Christian, of whom it is said that "he had great love for the divine service, but above all for the lesser daily offices of his Church because they are composed of the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, in which he found such perfect thoughts, that it was a delight to him to recite it. In talking with friends of the beauty of this Psalm, he was unable to restrain himself." This is exactly the character of the Psalm—it is so suggestive; and the more our minds are stored with copious ideas, the more our good affections are cultivated, the more do we like and prefer suggestive writing.

But the most touching allusion I have ever read to it—and it is to a verse so unmarked, that it shows how familiar it must have been to a good and most unhappy man—is, that when the virtues of the once-famous Emperor Maurice could not save him, but rather hastened his ruin, in the dissolute capital of the East, then in the awful closing scene, when in the presence of the Usurper he was compelled to gaze on the execution of his five sons, and when in that hour, ("such was his rigid attachment to truth and justice,") he revealed the pious falsehood of a nurse, who presented her own child in the place of "her king's,"—at each stroke "which he felt in his heart," says our own usually unfeeling historian, "he found strength to exclaim," in a verse of this Psalm, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and

true are thy judgments," and so unshaken he came to his own death.

If such simple verses can be and have been the last stay of souls in the uttermost of all agonies, is it not well that we should early make them our treasure, and make this our daily prayer? "Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of thy law."

## SERMON III.

### IRRETRIEVABLE BIRTHRIGHTS.

GEN. xxv. 34.

*“ Thus Esau despised his birthright.”*

ESAU was the living representative of Abraham, the Friend of God. He was the eldest son of Isaac, who was the one only and holy son of him to whom the promises were made. There was a kind of priesthood understood to be inherent and inherited in the eldest line of the patriarch's family. As Esau now, so later on, Reuben forfeited his headship to a younger brother.

There was further the golden promise of the inheritance of the Holy Land, in reliance on which they had resigned their own, and were living a simple life of faith leaning upon God, nomads among nations : the duty, the blessing and the hope which belonged to that life Esau cast away.

There was furthermore that which was something like what Heaven is to our thoughts. They were taught nothing direct of immortality or Resurrection, but they looked forward with a mysterious longing and joy often spoken of in Scripture to the time, when in their race and of their blood Messiah should be born, and all nations be blessed in Him, and a City of God be built.

This was the most sacred, the most blessed hope that men then had on earth, and Esau gave this up also.

He parted with all—because, as he said in the rough unreflective commonplace strain which ever marks persons of his character even now, and which they mistake for

common sense, "because he did not see the good of it all."  
—"What good shall this birthright do me?"

To have the free range of the present world, to have mountains and air, game enough for his bow, and nothing to fret him; this he thought "good."

There was much in him of that character which is so winning to the inexperienced at first sight, which looks like generosity and frankness, but can co-exist with hardness and rancour. There was that impatience which so often hangs on spurious energy; as different a thing as can be from the unbroken energy which will not be fretted, running over obstacles smoothly, instead of chafing round them; there was the readiness to give up anything which is a strain: to magnify small difficulties; the tendency to undervalue the future, or let it take its chance; to turn away from the ideal set before one, and to say, "I am content with lower aims." There was all that unmakes so many promising men nowadays, and reduces them to cyphers in the world.

"What is the good of lofty aims, of high aspirations, of noble hopes for one's country, or one's church? What is the good of devoting life or substance to an ideal end? What is the good of accumulating knowledge unless you can make it pay you? What is the good of cultivating your taste highly? What is the good of refining and strengthening your intellect? What is the good of it all, unless it will bring you name and fame and money to spend? What is the good?"

Thus Esau sold his birthright—and thus they sell theirs.

There is a much-praised English maxim which has done England harm. Knowledge is Power. It is true. But now, as it is commonly used, it is utterly vulgarizing. Knowledge is so great and glorious, that who has it has power; and even if he seek it for the sake of the power, power will come, mean as the motive is; it is impossible he should be disappointed. Yet knowledge not loved for itself is not really loved at all; the power it brings may do some good in the world; but it brings neither peace nor elevation to him who has sought and won it in this



spirit. I remember once to have heard a guardian say to his charge, "Knowledge is money in these days ; therefore work hard and get knowledge." I thought there never was so high an end urged for so mean a motive. Sure I was, that unless a brighter sun should dawn (as I trust it did in the boy's heart) there was bitter disappointment in store for both. To seek the most satisfying of all things—divine and human Knowledge—because it will give you possession of the most unsatisfying of all things—surely the "fine gold is becoming dim," if there are many among our countrymen who are of this tone. And I am persuaded that many of us are ; and truly I think that we must look to a younger generation to remove in your day something of this reproach.

Foreign nations do not hesitate to cast the reproach upon us. Not only that nation which above all others has studied, and thought, and written for pure love of knowledge and thought, sees in us that we despise our birthright. The contemptuous speech of one great Conqueror, which roused in us more bitterness than anything he ever said of us—let us take heed that we do not more and more point its truth even in that field from which the mercantile spirit ought to be clean away. If we prepare ourselves here for studying, or indeed have actually begun to study, the very choicest thoughts and words of our whole race, or are already climbing the first steps or setting our feet on the threshold of the Temple of Science ; if while our hours of Industry are wholly passed among such things, we have already made unto ourselves cold calculating hearts in the which we whisper that we will go exactly so far and no farther ; if we fix that point by saying thus and thus much of knowledge, thus and thus much of science, of reasoning power, of culture, of taste, of wisdom, will get me bread, or put me just over the line which will give me a certain position among men ; if the lofty thought, if the eager glimpse into eternal truths, is to us only a thing which we must be prepared to say something upon ; if the radiance of ever-changeful expression pencilling the most delicate shade of thought ; if the unlooked-for law in Nature, newly

revealed to man, are not beautiful in our eyes, not seized for their own sake, but only because at such a day and such an hour we can turn them to account ;—then what are we doing in the depth of our soul but bidding farewell to all that is lasting and spiritual in knowledge and wisdom, and taking in exchange for it a daily meal? Even the most sacred, the most holy things may be thus refused, or thus abused. We may give ourselves to them because we see how they will, or turn away from them because we do not see how they will serve our turn.\* But, in so choosing, we miss the very end for which alone they were given us. We find corruption strangely where God meant there should be nothing but life. And thus it is that first in matters of Knowledge a man despises his birthright.

2. Again, as Citizens, men despise their birthright. If when it is given them to choose their Rulers they deliberately set aside Thinkers—men who (whether in our opinion, rightly or not in detail), have begun life by sacrificing their chance of wealth to their hopes of wisdom and given their whole soul to the study of how best shall men be made wiser, better, and happier; if citizens set aside those who determine to think for themselves and to be bound to no single leader; if they deliberately rule that those whose sole title to have an opinion is that they have given their lives to become through cultivation capable of forming an opinion instead of engrossing themselves in mere mechanical labour; if they commit to a large and cultivated class the teaching of Christian congregations, the representation to men day by day of highest morality, the preparation of souls for an eternal world, and having so done are jealous beyond expression of their taking the slightest part in speaking the plainest truths as to the principles on which men should live and speak and decide in the most important of all functions; if they laugh at and despise the corrupt motives which affect the choice of rulers and yet will take no serious steps to render corrupt motives impotent—then surely in all these things there is a real denial and abnegation of the duty of Citizens to act on the highest grounds of Citizenship. They refuse

the permanent, the true ; they accept the temporal present fallacious good.

Thus, secondly men sell their birthright as Citizens.

3. But again, do we not—or are we not (I will say) in daily danger of—selling our Birthright in Religion ?

There is a Birthright here which is already in the hands of every one of you. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, and hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

Had Esau a priesthood entitling him to draw near to God for his family ? Every Christian man is in the Bible called a Priest of a yet higher order. None can exclude you from the immediate presence of God. He has given you the earnest of a Divine Spirit within your heart, Who, if you listen to Him, will eject every evil from within you, and make you perfect for every good word and work. You may not be called to the highest, holiest, happiest calling upon earth,—the work of an official Priest of God,—but none can take from you your true Priesthood, which entitles you to receive what you ask from Him, to represent Him among men, to be an intercessor for others.

Had Esau earthly promises ? so have you. A God who will never leave you, nor forsake you, has promised that you shall lack nothing ; has said that if you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, “all these things”—all earthly good—shall be added unto you. He has revealed to you means and ways of earthly happiness and peace, of which the men of Esau’s days had not the faintest thought.

Had Esau promise of Messiah—far off, to be born among his children ? what was this in comparison with what you have ? The knowledge of Messiah Himself, of what He said and did, and of what He is, a living, almighty, everlasting friend—the Man Jesus, caring for you in sorrow, glad in your joy, ready every moment to strengthen you and be with you.

This is your birthright of which Esau’s was a poor shadow indeed. Can there be any fear of your parting

with it? Do you think of it, hold it, act as if it were yours really?

How are you using it? Do you live in daily prayer in a feeling of trust placed in God? or are your prayers brought down to the lowest point of asking for what you cannot help asking for? Are you really working into your character the power of the Spirit of God? Some fail to do this because they do not perceive in themselves the defects which require curing. Some have tried for a time, and found as they fancied little or no result. Some have looked critically at others and disparagingly, whom they knew to be trying to live a Life of Faith—and think that there is an absence of effect in them. Some are too impatient to persevere after their second or third fall. Some have their minds too much set on enjoyment to find quiet enough for any kind of watchfulness.

But to all these we say—you can learn your own defects if you will examine yourselves. And the effect when you did try was probably much greater than you suppose, and carried you over some critical time of temptation. And as for the effect in others, you cannot know what they have already overcome, or how soon they may succeed. And if it is worth while to do so much for passing times and people (which I will not now deny), it stands to reason that it is worth while to do more for times that will not end. If you can be patient in one kind of self-cultivation, you undoubtedly can be at least equally patient in a more important one. If the one brings you pleasure, so will the other. If it was less pleasant formerly than it is now that you are well practised to take exertion and live actively, so it will also grow daily more pleasant to exercise your soul in righteousness, and make your spirit firm and wise and pure. Think of what God has done and suffered for you, and of what He is to you; and count this a Birthright indeed, for so it is.

Do not say “What is the good of it?” It is not the present good that is in question, though the present good is great.

The differences between True and False, Noble and Base,

Shadowy and Permanent, are plainly not things of the present.

For the lost Birthright is the one thing that is irretrievable. Esau could never regain it, though he sought it with many tears, though in after life he cried a great and exceeding bitter cry, when he found that it could not be recovered. Not more recoverable than his, is yours if you lose it now. Lose the sunrise of Knowledge; lose the sunrise of Religion, and how should they dawn again upon an ignorant soul, upon a depraved heart?

In the history, the Will of God was against Esau's having back his birthright. The will of the dissembling mother was against it. The better and the worst parts of his brother's nature were against it. And so it is always. Neither good men nor bad men consent that a forfeited birthright should be restored.

There is not one thing in favour of restoration; nothing at least but the weak wish of decrepit Isaac and the passionate desire of Esau, to have that back for nothing as a gift which had been once his own by right.

He had said "Where was the good of Knowledge as Knowledge? What was the good of Religion as Religion?" And neither God nor Man attempted to demonstrate to him the truth of what he had known by instinct, but what he hid his eyes from seeing.

## SERMON IV.

### POISON AND ANTIDOTE SIDE BY SIDE.

EXODUS xv. 22—27.

*“ And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter : therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink ? And he cried unto the Lord ; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet : there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians : for I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees : and they encamped there by the waters.”*

MANY of you perhaps know an affecting legend of the discovery of the most precious of our medicines—the heaven-provided plant by the aid of which men penetrate the tangled river-wildernesses over which miasma ever broods, or the vast treeless and uncultivated plains in whose clear air the subtle poison floats—the plant which combats that feverous poison in the frame of man and keeps it at bay, and makes the enterprise of Travellers and the devotion of Missionaries and the advance of Armies well-nigh without danger. It is said that the first discoverer of the wondrous plant which has wrought such changes was a fugitive slave ; that, dying of low fever in the trackless wild which he had

sought, he dragged himself to drink his last draught at a pool which to all appearance was like the others, brown with vegetable decay.

But from the sleep to which he lay down as his last he awoke again a stronger man, and soon found the wondrous efficacy of draughts of that water, and recognised the virtue imparted to it by the fallen shrubs which gave it its strange flavour. It is said that with a frank greatness of heart he returned to his master to tell his tale, and this is the fair legend that hangs round the discovery of the Cinchona tree.

It is impossible not to remember it as we read the history of Marah. A whole nation of fugitive slaves believe themselves on the point of death. Their voices are lifted up against their leader. It is the third day since they could replenish their desert store and their water is nearly exhausted. And now they are mocked with a worse delusion than the cruel mirage itself. The very fantasy of water floating far away upon the sands, trees overhanging it and reflected in it, and blue hills beyond, deceives man in those regions and flees before him. But this suffering host had reached water indeed, but water which none could drink. Amid the outcry which broke from barked and fevered lips the miraculous tree is shown to the praying chieftain and the waters are sweet to them. The lesson there learned is turned at once, as we read, "into a statute and an ordinance." And the next stage sees them encamped beside Twelve living Springs of wholesome water, and under the shade of Seventy Palms—trees for shelter and for food, and no more for healing only. The order of these events—the want of all water, the water reached but found bitter and then healed, and then the encampment by the sweet waters, and the mention of the well-known symbolic numbers, would be by themselves sufficient to show us that it was intended to convey some spiritual lesson by the selection of the incidents. But as it is one of the first lessons in their history, the people have the lesson brought home to them and the symbol explained.

(1.) We see that the water was deleterious, not distasteful

only; for the statute and the ordinance which in verse 26 is based on this event, runs thus:—"If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee."

The diseases of Egypt are alluded to and the healing might of God, as parallel with the quality of the waters and the remedy used for them. As the water, which they in their necessity would have drunk, was unwholesome and would have wrought disease, but that it was healed by the obedience of Moses to God's directions, so if they are attentive and obedient to His voice, He will ever find them healing remedies for all things that might hurt them.

Obedience to God's word shall be their unfailing security against the fatal difficulties which without it will bar their progress through life.

Difficulties, fatal difficulties too, lie before every one; have already been encountered by ourselves in our life-progress hitherto. How have we met them? By obedience to God's word, or in some other way?

We cannot choose but move onward through the world—all about us are moving; we among them. We need Water by the way. We want Strength, we want Refreshment. We find it in pleasures, in companionship, in the experience, in the advice, in the examples which surround us. Every book we read, every saying we hear, comes like draughts of water to our hearts, spirits, characters. But what we thus receive from the world in which we live is tainted with something fatal.

Any bitterness, any dissatisfaction we experience, warns us that we cannot drink our fill with safety; but as long as that dissatisfaction lasts we are not lost. The fatal moment will be if ever we are perfectly satisfied. The Israelites fell into more fatal dangers than the drinking of this unwholesome water and did *not* cry against Moses, or exclaimed



only against his hindering indulgence of which the end was death. But here was dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction led to remedy.

When a boy's first dissatisfaction in life begins with his perception of how easy it is for him to do wrong, how hard for him to do right, to think right, to speak right, how much more easy to fall into many a fault which I need not here enumerate ; his first impulse in the way of repentance is perhaps to quarrel with the circumstances in which he is placed, to accuse those about him of casting unfair temptations in his way—perhaps even his parents of placing him where temptations abound, his masters, for not more absolutely preventing such temptations, his schoolfellows in intercourse with whom faults come out.

He does not yet perceive that temptations are not accidents of his own case. The Bible in this and many another place expresses that these unwholesome circumstances (treacheries, so to speak, in the very places from which he expects strength) belong not merely to his case but to human life everywhere under all circumstances. His remedy is not murmuring then but obedience to God's word. He is himself to find the healing for the poisonous water which is presented to him. God brought him to it that he might "seek unto God," and obtain from Him the precious thing which he may infuse into it to deprive it of its deadly effect upon his spiritual constitution. He is to receive the grace which God will give him in answer to his prayers. He is to read God's Word and to use the wisdom and strength which he there will find, in order to purify the circumstances of his life. So doing he will render those circumstances wholesome, not for himself only, but for those with him.

This, then, is the first lesson of *Marah*.

(2.) It was not possible, perhaps that the children of Israel should, by persevering in the unwholesome draught, which is there typical of sin, have vitiated their taste till they delighted in it. But it is too possible in the antitype.

From the first draught of sin the innocent heart starts and

turns aside. But there is a fatal way of serving up the deadly thing in cups which, according to the old metaphor, have the rims sweetened. The bitterness of the poison is not noticed as it swims in upon the lips from the sugared edge. Thus the fever comes into the veins. Then the head swims and the languid eyes see things falsely and through a haze, and the drowse which ends in death begins; broken by many an uneasy dream, many a wakening glimpse; but never, perhaps, shaken off again.

Better than this is murmuring itself. The Israelites are not represented as having fallen at present into that grievous condition. If any one fears that it may have begun in him, if thoughts once shocking to him have ceased to be repulsive; if temper seems to him an excuse for profanity, and casual provocation an apology for temper, surely the low fever of the soul has begun. Let him put away the bitter draught of the sweetened cup. Let him "cry unto the Lord," and the Lord will show him "the Tree" which will first open his eyes to what he has been doing, and then heal him.

(3.) For the third lesson is this:

Though we are compelled by God's providence to pass through difficulty and temptation, we are not doomed to dwell there. If we are faithful it is but in passing that we are so endangered.

Only use the remedy of obedience to God's Word to-day, and to-morrow you will be beside the Twelve ever-springing Fountains, and under the wavy shade of the giant Palm trees, nor will you find that a lonely land. All they will be there who have been faithful always with you. Specially close to you will be those whose faithfulness has been due to, or aided by your steadfast example. "They encamped there by the waters" an exceeding great army.

One of our trials when we set out to be obedient to God is the belief that we are so *lonely* in our obedience. "I see so many more—I seem to see every one—practically departing so far from the lessons of home. One wrongs his own conscience, I know. Another offends my sense of

what is right. I feel as if I had to find out my own way for myself, and to live alone so very much."

Beloved, you are after all mistaken in this apprehension ; you judge too harshly when you think that one whose conduct, perhaps, is in some particular wrong, has therefore no conscience at all. His conscience may be struggling very much with him. If you feel that you yourself are lonely in your strength against sin ; if you could not mention to a friend all that you are doing in the way of effort, lest he should think you self-righteous, or daunt you by saying you will not succeed, or even smile to learn some weakness which he did not suspect, then why should you expect less reserve in others ? Do not be daunted by appearances, you are less lonely than you suppose. How lonely did Elijah once believe himself to be. It was God only who could assure him of the secret sympathy, the unceasing prayers, the closeness to himself, of a multitude of some thousand faithful spirits. How would it have fared with the prophet's spiritual condition had he been finally deceived into believing himself alone ?

And there is another lesson to be learned, one which belongs to us, your elders, and which I would not pass over in your hearing. Prefects, masters, parents, all we who know, who care for, who sympathise with, who entertain high hopes of the issue of the struggle with fatal difficulties which is going on in so many hearts—to us the example of Moses comes out in clearest colour.

It was not indifferent to him that the people murmured ; he looked not on himself as simply appointed to guide through the wilderness men who would live if God supported them, must die if by God's doing they came to bitter springs. He looked not on himself as simply a leader, to be bold in heart, true in example. He was to suffer with the sufferings, to sympathise with the trials of his children.

They murmured, but he cried unto the Lord, and "the Lord showed him a Tree."

Ours it is to make constant, faithful, loving supplications for those of whom we have taken the oversight, called to it, perhaps, by circumstances which we never supposed could

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have placed us where we are. Masters, parents, prefects, on all of us it rests to pray earnestly, and use our intellects and hearts to find the remedy for an evil—God's own remedy, not far away, perhaps, but unperceived.

He who made the trial has also made the cure. He waits but to reveal it, for "He is the Lord that healeth us."

## SERMON V.

### THE RELUCTANT PROPHET.

NUMBERS xxiv. 1, 2.

*“When Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of the Lord came upon him.”*

THE history of Balaam, the magician and prophet which is read to-day in our churches, is in its persons and its scenery as full of remarkable pictures to the intellectual eye as it is full of ideas for spiritual instruction. Many of you know the grand burst of our Christian lyricist, who recalls the wizard figure planted on the top of the rocks—

“His wild hair waving on the desert breeze,”

—ready to curse the people of the Lord, if one shadow of God’s displeasure against them should cross the heaven he gazed upon; ready, if that could not be, to corrupt them with temptations worthy of the Father of all Evil; yet pouring from his lips, strophe after strophe, an unrivalled ode of benediction, and closing with the vision of Christ Himself and of the destiny that awaited every nation and kingdom visible within his horizon.

Into what a wilderness are we carried—a wilderness, I mean, of strange thoughts, unformed ideas, monstrous principles, which suited well the weird Moabite mountain region,

the haunt of tribes who to this day render it inaccessible to any enterprise—as we see the chieftain and his baleful prophet climbing from peak to peak, in hope of finding one place more wicked than another from which the spells, hitherto powerless, might be found potent ; seeking a nook from which only a small part might be seen of the intended victim nation lying before him in their beauty and their order, in the horrible trust that if they could not be drowned under a flood of maledictions, yet some poison-seed might be lodged by spiritual hatred in one corner of the tribes, to spread an infection by degrees, or at least to sting and burn, and give agony where it could not effect destruction.

Surely as we look at this man, flinging up the smoke of his seven bullocks and seven rams, first from one set of new piled altars and then from another—surely, we say, a more wicked man than this never lived.

And then, again, we observe that he gives utterance from time to time to noble and highminded sentiments—thoughts and words which evidently stream out of the fountains of his heart, not forced into his lips like oracles.

With indignation he repudiates the notion that worldly advantages would induce him to utter blighting charms against God's directions. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more."

With clear-sightedness he contemplates the end of life, and the dawning, it may be, of another existence, and the valuelessness of all that is not good. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

We have a man before us who, while his audacity and superstition are monstrous, still has a strong fear of God Almighty upon him ; a determination not to disobey Him openly, a hope that at last he might be found on God's side.

But it is with him as it is with others who try to deceive themselves, and perform a juggler's trick with their own soul. First they wish to have their own way in life and

yet have it blessed by God as if it were His way. Next they cease to think it impossible to elude or to deceive even God. We see here a man beseeching Him to allow him to do what He had twice and thrice forbidden him to do : knowing and being sure that what he wished was wrong, he prayed God somehow, by His great providence, to make it right and let him do it.

Have you never felt this temptation yourselves ? Can you not recognise how hard it was for Balaam to dismiss those friends with a refusal ? Can you not, as it were, feel for him, when he said that he would ask God yet again whether he might be permitted to go ? Do you not know what it is to have a parent's word, which is to you as God's word, pointing you in one direction, and yet to be so clearly persuaded in your own mind of the suitableness of a course you wish for, as to be bent upon taking your own way, feeling sure that your parents will come round to your way of thinking, and so make it right at last, even if it is not quite right now ?

Well, and how did God punish Balaam ? Just as He will punish you if you persist. By letting you take your own course. A word here, a sign there, but your own way given you as a matter of fact ; and you launched upon a course which more and more will carry you far from that love which knew and chose the best for you.

That is the end of following your own ways, only hoping that God will make them right ways by and by, and forgive anything at last which shall have been irreconcilable with right.

Such a course of life may be long before it utterly corrupts a man. It may leave him still susceptible of grandest emotions at the sight of things noble and true. Just as Balaam at the sight of the beautiful order and the law-directed strength, and fresh and splendid promise of the young nation, new born out of Egypt, with true feeling exclaimed, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel !"

The particular sin of choosing a path different to God's path, yet hoping to keep within His favour, still is as it

were lit with a Divine sunlight from that hope, though the sun of life is fast sinking through that dreadful choice. The fact that a man may have many high hopes and some noble aims, while his heart is alienated really from God, ought to warn us not to trust to feelings which occasionally inspire us, unless we also find that in dull, discouraging, and apparently unprofitable days, we are really not anxious to do our own will and turn back from God's.

How strongly do such thoughts throng upon us such a day as this, when there are so many of you spending the First Sunday in a Public School, who must more or less consciously be making a kind of choice whether you will serve God through good and bad, by industry, by truthfulness, by modesty and courage, or whether you will live lives of self-pleasing and carelessness; and when all the rest of those within these walls must know that their lives and conduct are destined by God's providence to stamp the lives of the new-comers with some impression for good or for evil, which at the least must last many years, and which may last for ever.

Gazing on such a congregation as this, one almost becomes conscious that your fair order and reverent worship are being watched from spiritual heights by enemies who fain would curse and blight you, and who, if they are withheld by the mighty power of God from so doing (so that perhaps even they cannot refrain from something like admiration for the promise of lives which have been begun amid blessings), will certainly, like the heathen King and the False Prophet, come down ere long from those heights of theirs and mingle with you, and as they cannot destroy your spiritual life by curses from without, will come and tempt you with allurements from within, to try to make you forfeit your advantages yourselves, and fling away all that God or man can do for you; to make you as unloving as themselves, as disobedient as themselves, as unhappy as themselves; to transform you out of the likeness of the children of God into their own image of the children of sin.

If this be so (and it is true to the letter), consider a



little further what we read of that prophet, and see how one who had such gifts and faculties and appreciation became so lost. For it is really after his example that all will be lost who from a high standing fall into wickedness.

We take two points.

1. If Balaam was lost, it was through himself that he was lost. It was not because God ordered or willed it. God did not keep him ignorant: he knew God's way and His will—His way and will about His chosen people and their prospects, and the holiness by which they should live. He was able to understand and appreciate these revelations made to him.

God certainly did not leave him ignorant, neither did God leave him without the wish to be saved; we have already read of his longings on that head.

So then here was one to whom God gave both the earnest desire to be saved, and the knowledge how to be saved. Yet he was a lost man already when he comes before us.

It was his own doing then, and it was by the same means which will lose us, if we let it; it was because he did not follow out his wish into action, and because he did not use the knowledge which he had.

2. What then was the means he took for his own destruction, when he had both the wish and the knowledge to be saved? Exactly those which will offer themselves to you as very natural—an attempt to combine the service of God and the service of the world. He was anxious to stand well with his Lord God. But side by side with this, as of equal importance, he held it a great thing to have a brilliant alliance with, and a strong influence over, one of the principal personages of his time. The opportunity for it opened, and he could not help embracing it. He was not ready to adopt a fawning, cringing attitude with the King; he had no mind to be used and despised by him; he meant to preserve his independence. His language to him is remarkably lofty. The influence which he wished for was not a mere money-commanding influence. He desired the respect of the great, as well as intercourse with them. That

is to say, he looked at the world in a very much broader and better way than many do who seek its favour. But when he had taken his best view of the world's opinion, he put it on a level with God's opinion. And he wished to have both; and as it was hopeless in his view—and very truly so—to persuade such a world to be under God's obedience, he tried to persuade God to sanction his friendship with such a world.

Now if any thinks that the fall of Balaam here was quite unlike anything which can be prepared for him, he never was more mistaken. There are even here, and must be in every society, those who wish to please the world in what I may call a manly way. The world to all of us is that general opinion of our friends and companions which goes on telling you perpetually, that to be well off and to live as you like, and have nobody but yourself to please, and to be much made of and very popular, and not to be too particular about little things, is more desirable than any other way of living; and that as you cannot hope for quite all this, the nearer you can contrive to come to it the better for you. That is the world's opinion; and will you tell me that it is not very much alive among boys? And then, alas! it is very possible to think that and yet expect God's blessing.

Whereas Christ, if you read the Gospel, tells you very differently. He does not say that rich people are more to be envied than poor, nor that pleasing yourself is what you came into the world for, nor that popularity is a thing to be desired. I need not quote exactly what He does say on these subjects, for you know it. But one view is the view taken by Balaam; the other is the view set before us by Him Whom Balaam said that he himself should one day see; Whom he said that he should behold, but, alas! not be near Him. The Star of Jacob, he called Him, and the Sceptre of Israel. Which teacher will you follow? Which will you love?

For now I have only one more observation to make to you, and it is this: Even the disobedient prophet prophesied of Christ, and even the disobedient boy serves Christ's

will. Both do it without meaning it, and therefore they have no reward. But they cannot choose but serve Him one way or other.

Every bee labouring at its cell ; every wild creature destroying in the forest ; every insect which down in the scarcely fathomable depths of the sea builds its house of microscopic smallness and then dies, having laid down one grain of chalk towards a future continent ; all these are working upon God's world, though in blindness.

The builders on the Egyptian Pyramids, every soldier of Alexander who fell in his wars, contributed his atom to the work and his exertion to the structure and to the ideas of society.

Conscious or unconscious, we live under God's law : all we do is overruled to serve some purpose for those who come after us, to occupy its own place of honour or dishonour in the eternal edifice of God's kingdom.

How happy are we if we work, not in unconsciousness, not in rebellion, so that our work will have to be overruled ; but consciously, brightly, happily, proudly, knowing for Whom we work, and that He accepts us and our work. How happy to work, not by instinct like the animal, not with uninstructed will like the labourer, but with the open eyes and glad heart of the Children of God, who know their Father's mind, and seek to realise it. We cannot, indeed, tell the exact portion of this great Temple which we are engaged in placing or in solidifying, in carving or in polishing. We cannot tell at present which angle or which buttress is really ours, because the Temple is so vast and at present so unfinished. But work done, not like the bad prophet's with a wish to avoid God, but with a wish to please Him, will never pass away, and will never cease to be *our* work. It will be recognised for ever.

Each of you may at least see what work lies near his own ; each can judge whether you cannot improve what you have done already ; whether as you gain more skill, you cannot do better and better work while time is given you.

This, among many others, is surely one of those majestic

truths which lie hidden for those who can see them in the habit of receiving the Holy Communion. Each Communion as it comes seals what has been last done, consecrates what next is coming. You take your place in the long list of God's workers who have been since the days of Jesus Christ, the line that will extend itself to the very end of all things. And, "darkly and glimmeringly, but really there," you discern, time after time, the assurance that if you surrender yourself to God, He will accept you and wean you from the love of things unworthy, however strong it now is, and give you your true place as His recognised and conscious son

## SERMON VI.

### THE DIFFIDENT PROPHET.

Exodus iv. 1.

*“And Moses answered and said, But behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice, for they will say the Lord hath not appeared unto thee.”*

OUR duty to our Lord in this world requires that we should do somewhat more than live a life of obedience to Him. Our obedience must be *acknowledged* obedience. We must not be ashamed of it so as to veil or disguise it. We must not parade it ; we must not fast or pray or give alms to be seen of men. Still we must never be loth to say “Whose we are and Whom we serve.”

Without ostentation and without shame, our lives must be simple, quiet, unobtrusive yet real, unconcealed, open and honestly acknowledged courses of obedience to Him Whose name we bear. Our Baptisms, our Confirmations, our Communions witness this in the quietest, holiest way. We are not ashamed to profess the faith of Christ Crucified on such occasions. We must not be ashamed from week to week to live up to our professions.

We may read this lesson writ large in the history of God's sending Moses to deliver His people. Moses went through a trial on Mount Horeb ; the exact opposite of the trial of Christ.

Moses was tempted to decline the contest with the World altogether, to shrink from action and from pro-

minence when God called him. Christ was tempted to take the world by storm, to overwhelm it with conviction.

The God-man was tempted of the Evil One to force Himself upon God's providence, to take the glory of the world as the means to establish a heavenly kingdom. But in the history of Moses, God Himself takes a very great man, as it were apart, brings to a point his long-nurtured and brooded-over schemes for doing good upon a great scale, endues him with grace and power to carry out those schemes, yet finds the human will so weak at last, and so wanting, that it was near failing at the very moment it was called upon to exert itself.

Moses was full of sympathy with the poor, full of desire to see God's ancient promises realised ; he had long ago hoped when he slew the oppressor, that he might have some part in raising the condition of the miserable, elevating his nation, putting a stop to injustice.

But when the time came, and God said to him, "Now, go," then for the first time it flashed upon Moses in all its awfulness that he was unfit to carry out what he had so aspired to be trusted with ; and even when he saw his own hand work and unwork miracles, still the contrast between what he was and what he ought to have been unnerved him ; he was conscious of a fatal inconsistency between his own noble ambition and his powers of performance, and he had nothing to say but "O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send."

He had longed to be able to move and sway the heart of the multitude : to bind the thousands of Israel in one grand enterprise for freedom ; to persuade, unite, fill them with the enthusiasm and energy which should create slaves into a nation—set that nation on its way from their homes and habits of bondage to the conquest of a land where they should live under new laws, even, and strict, and progressive.

This was the least, the baldest, account that could be given of the grandeur, of the ambition of Moses in past time ; but when God appears to him and says, "Thy dream is a dream no more—begin to-day to live thy thought,"

he turns in upon himself, and asks, "What qualifications for the task are mine? Eloquence and ready powers are the first and lowest necessity for one who is to move multitudes—and I—I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue."

And again the solitary homely habits of one whose days were spent in the petty troubles and increasing wealth of the sheep-owner of the East, whose lofty thoughts were of the presence of God shadowed among the valleys and caverns, or glowing on the sunrise peaks of Sinai—but whose common daily ways had after all a great tendency to obliterate the hopes of youth and quench all loftiness of thought together, how shall such an one resume the turmoil of the street and of the camp after the deep peace of desert life?—resume it, nay, delight in it, quell its excesses, guide its impulses? It cannot be. At eighty years old who should dream of such a thing still, though his sinews were as hard, and his eye as clear, and his form as healthful and as spare as the son's of the desert should be? "Forty years ago it would have been different. Then was my heart quick to feel, and my hand to avenge. I saw the cruelty and I smote the cruel. I ought to have been called then. Then I might have led my people as I wished to do. But there are younger men now, men more like what I was then. Such exploits and such organisations are for them. I have as it were eaten out my heart in exile these forty years"—"Let my Lord send by the hand of him whom He will send."

Now this he said, because even yet he was trusting still upon himself when he trusted; and when he shrank it was himself that he distrusted. His eighty years of life had been given him that in its vast experience he might learn that God was all, and man was nothing. And he *had* very nearly learnt it in truth; the crust or chrysalis of Self was nearly ready to drop off; it clung about him yet a little while; it needed just this face to face interview with God to rid him of it entirely—and God, with a few gentle touches, made him realise to himself what his long experience was worth.

He spoke in this sad, disappointed, downcast manner, even after he had seen the vision of God; even after he had seen the miraculous powers with which he himself had been endowed. For he had seen them to his own amazement, and had not yet quite realised all that was meant by them, not quite grasped the truth that all power consists in submission to God, all effectiveness in contentment at being a passive ready instrument in God's hands; all strength of will in having no will but God's.

What had he found himself able to do, and what had he found himself unable to do? If he had understood these two things about himself he would have understood his mission—and doubtless it came to him soon, though not in a moment.

He found God had not made him more eloquent, had not even relieved his natural defect. He says, "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor *since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant.*"

Here was his *in-ability*—it was clear that Israel was not going to be delivered by his personal gifts.

On the other hand his staff had become a serpent, and the serpent a staff. The lithe and flexible life had been frozen into an instrument of his use, after having been wrought out of it. And he had the power of extreme pollution and perfect cleansing of his own pollution. What was excommunication, what was Egyptian purity to a man who could become a leper, and from leprosy become clean under the priest's eye? And he was assured that he should take the sacred water of the Nile and convert it into the loathsome shuddering form of new-shed blood. What wild distraction would be made in the ritual of the central sanctity of the land, when the priests gazing on the substance of the water could not say what it was—whether it was that holy water at the touch of which, according to their creed, impurity grew clear, or whether it was itself that utmost pollution of blood which required that sacred stream to purge it.

Here were signs indeed. We need not ask whether they symbolised deeper mysteries, but look on them merely as



wonderful works. And here was to be his ability—not of himself in any sense. Of God alone was any deliverance to appear.

This he was *not* able to do—to save Israel by his own goodness, or wisdom, or courage. This he *was* able to do—to trust God for all, and trusting God to do all things.

He had seen these plain signs of this simple thing; seen them, not fully understood them yet. And therefore the *will* was pausing still. Still reluctant to go, still anxious God should find and send a better messenger. But the voice of God within him and without him waxed more imperious. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. He sternly pointed out to him that such eloquence as he longed for was but a secondary qualification. “Thy brother, I know that he can speak well;”—the legislator need not be the orator. “Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth. And I will teach you what ye shall do.” Mark the manner of God’s anger. What patience as to real difficulties in the midst of indignation against the want of trust and courage. The work is to frame institutions for the advancement of his people, which will take root from their greatness and suitability. He may leave it to others simply to introduce or recommend them.

We shall have no such work to do as this. Statesmen standing by the fountain of national life and interest may form some conception of the multitudinous aspect of the complicated relations which must have upheaved themselves in the sight of those who have attempted the construction of society from the beginning. We, whose field is narrower, are sure to underrate the vastness of the problem. But in our narrowest fields there are busy within our own souls the same desires in their measures, the same divine promptings to work *our* work manfully, and as toward God the same reluctances, the same complainings that the demand on us is beyond our strength, the same self-excusing, the same clinging to what we are, the same dislike to put ourselves forward even for God’s sake, the same distrust of ourselves and of Him, which God com-

bated that great day when He showed Himself to Moses on the Mount, which God combats with us in the secret of our hearts.

Were it necessary in order to enable us to work our work, (as it was necessary to enable Moses to work his,) God would show Himself by visible signs to us also. But it is not needful and therefore it does not happen. Each means proportioned to each end is the generous economy of nature and of grace. And our duty is best suggested to us by the means God does use to bring it home; and our strength is best supplied in the way in which He supplies it.

There is not one of us who can say he does not know in ways which he can trace as the ways of God what his duty is: there is not one who can say that he has ever complained to God of insufficient strength, without finding his complaint answered either by ministration of grace or else by disappearance of difficulties. God says to every one, "Live thou a life of open, acknowledged obedience to me." "You are my son; own me as your father." And then perhaps our hearts fail, and we say as Moses, "My friends will not believe me when I acknowledge Thee, and express either by word or act that I have heard Thy voice, and am beginning to obey it;" they will say, "The Lord hath not appeared unto thee."

Now you who feel this difficulty, and who cannot help shrinking at it, read this chapter with care, and see if it will not help you. As He appeared visibly to Moses, so He gave him visible help, visible strength. As He speaks invisibly to you and tells you of your duty, He will give you the invisible strength within, and He will make your difficulties disappear before you, if you but press upon them. At their strongest they are but shadows which will give way before flesh and blood.

Very critical are the complications which come upon many of you here. Many of you are tempted to evils before you half understand how terrible the evil is. Many of you are not half aware how very great is the strength which you can obtain by praying earnestly for strength. Many of those who have failed will tell you that they failed in an hour

when they were very near succeeding. Many of those who have conquered some great evil within will tell you how hard it went with them, how near they were to failing.

Those who have passed weeks or months sad and dispirited because of some evil with which they could not deal, have known at last how all that while they were gathering strength through perseverance in Prayer or Communion, or through giving themselves secretly to religious thoughts which at the time they dare not express, and then the critical time came when God willed, and they overcame their fear, and they have to thank Him for the change which came to themselves, or to a friend through them, or ran more widely still.

On the contrary, who can express the grief it is to see the visible signs in conduct, in tone, even in the face of one who has heard God's voice and resisted it? To see his brightness die away and his countenance fallen, and the sign of wilful sin written upon it, to know that for such an one the transition from childhood is not experience strengthening innocence, but indifference hardening folly. To see this happen is as plain an instance of unbelief,—unbelief I mean in goodness, unbelief in the plain lesson of the world,—as it was to the old nations of the world to see the magician driven from the field by the workings of the God of nature.

What interests trembled in the balance while Moses was debating! It is not for yourselves only you will be responsible, if you debate till the time is gone.

Think not what any one will say except God Himself when you make up your mind to engage once more in duty you ought never to have dropped.

You are fit for your duty, or God would not have placed it before you. If they say, "The Lord hath not appeared unto thee," simply persevere. If your first effort is received unfavourably, your consistency will be believed in before long—"It shall come to pass if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign."

## SERMON VII.

### THE INDEPENDENT PROPHET.

DANIEL x. 18, 19.

*"There came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my Lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me."*

Who is this that in the presence of the angel is so weak and feeble, that for a while he cannot bear even to hear him speak; that he faints, and loses speech and sight before him? It is one than whom few nobler, few greater, or more courageous men have ever been.

A very few vivid scenes of his experiences have been strongly sketched for us by his own hand. An extended knowledge of his life and times would form one of the most remarkable pages of the volume of history.

In the most marvellous period of the most singular of ancient empires,—the age and empire which stands as the symbol of anti-Christian power—this Daniel was the right hand of all-powerful Kings.

The world has never seen more rapid conquerors than they were; more absolute or more effective rulers; and when they were at the height of their power, their prime minister was the last man we might expect,—a Jewish prophet.

One monarch succeeded another, but the minister changed not; even dynasties changed, and he still held the reins of power.

From early manhood to extreme old age he fell not from his dangerous position, or if he may be said to have once fallen for a day, it was but to return with double honour.

There have perhaps been other men in history whose influence may have been as great and nearly as unbroken. But where shall we find one who has so reigned by the same means?

We know the injustice and the corruption, the thousand false arts, the shame worse than death to which many have submitted, whom the world has called great ministers.

But this man neither practised nor bowed down to any such things. He is like one man only in modern history—that St. Bernard with whom Kings and Kingdoms took counsel, knowing that they should hear nothing from him but the right and the true. What marks these two from first to last is the dignity with which they keep their way. The world sought them when they most displeased it.

Daniel, then, is a noble example of the good, great man. He had known what it was to be a captive and a prisoner and a slave. He knew what it was to be a despot's counsellor and rule half the civilised world; and the one thing which upheld him in his first estate, and guided him to the last, was his clear sense of his own position before God and Man; a large wide view of his own being; a clear view of his earthly master's claims on him, and overspreading and bounding all other things and thoughts, the Fear of God—thorough Independence of man, perfect Dependence upon God.

For there is a false Independence of character, and also a true and lofty one; Independence of character in itself is neither bad nor good; except we are independent we cannot be manly; but there is an Independence which is not only wrong, but weak.

In common life the Independence of one man is that which impresses all with a sense of power, which makes others give way to him; which lifts him certainly from one stage of influence to another.

The Independence of a second may be of such a grain, and so worn, that it will have little value—that it will

frequently bring him into false positions ; he will sacrifice justice to maintain it ; it will seem to him by its requirements to sanction much harshness ; there awaits it the certain forfeiture of friendship and of influence.

Now these two kinds of Independence which often wear the same appearance, and act in many details in precisely the same way, seem to differ at last in this—viz., that one is the result of Self-esteem, and the other is of a very strong sense of Responsibility. That is to say, they are in reality as different feelings as we can conceive, though in many things outwardly they look very much alike.

A strong sense of Responsibility is the true source of genuine Independence of character.

To feel and know what we are, where we are, that we have real duties, and are really answerable in the most minute particulars for doing them, and for our manner of doing them—this constant thought and insight is the mother of all real and lasting Independence of character.

It is an old maxim that no one can command who cannot obey. He will never understand his duty to inferiors, or their duty to him, who has not learnt, and does not steadily practise his own duty to superiors.

If you ever see or know one whose ascendancy over others is a marked characteristic of him, which he seems to possess by nature, you may be certain that his common thoughts are not about ascendancy ; they are about obedience to his part in life.

What was the kind of Independence which marked the prophet and statesman of whom we speak ? Was it that kind of independence which was determined to make it felt that neither king nor subjects could dispense with his services ? Was it *haughty* independence ? Was it that secret independence which looked onward to the time when it would throw off the cloak of servility, and reveal itself in its own supposed greatness, and change and trample on all that had hitherto vexed and fretted and impeded it ?

Observe how zealously, how humbly Daniel *serves* ; see with what reverence he speaks to his master the King,—

"Thou art a King of Kings. The God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all."

But, mark again, this language of homage is not held while he is rising. It is when he is in full power. Again, it is not the language of the lips which expressed no real emotions. When he foresees days of darkness coming down upon his King, he is "astonished one hour, and his thoughts trouble him." Each prince in turn finds in him so zealous a minister that first he is placed on the King's council, and then is created provincial governor of Babylon, then is made Third Ruler of the kingdom, lastly, by Darius, he is made the first President of the Council of Three, who controlled all the Satraps of the empire.

Yet, look at the other side of his character during the progress which so honoured and developed his great powers. His first act of all, the act of his youth and his captivity, is positively to refuse to obey in taking the unlawful diet. Next we find him intercepting the Royal Edict, and going with a remonstrance to the King himself against his tyranny. Next when the darkness and the madness are coming down over him, Daniel utters to him the last advice, which he had intellect to comprehend; "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity."

To Belshazzar, offering to invest him with new dignities, his language is, "Thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another." Not often have been heard at the revels of the tyrants and the men of sin of this world warnings so solemn, and prophecies so bold as those in which he reminded the weak, bad prince of his father's pride, and of his father's madness, and of his own headstrong impieties, and told him that the judgment was come.

But even in that hour, because Daniel spoke with insight and hid nothing, and quailed not and yet trusted not in his

own strength, and stood not on his own dignity but endured as seeing Him that was unseen ; therefore the King was silent, and only conferred rank and honour on the messenger of wrath.

This prophet was a true man. He strove by prayer and thought to fill his heart and mind with truth, and to him therefore his God was not a name, nor was He some great power seated in the heavens out of sight, of Whose will and ways he was not certain.

To him God was within him and round about, and encompassed him on every side, and his will was always certain, for it was always truth and justice and righteousness ; and therefore to him the great earthly King was seen in clear undazzling light ; when his words were just, it was well ; when he gave him work to do he did it ; but when he set himself against God's will, then would Daniel have nothing to do with him, nor give any heed to him, any more than if his words were wind.

When a Royal Edict prohibited prayer for a time, it cost him not one thought or fear ; the hours of his day were spent as usual. " King Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime."

Now these lessons of Independence—to know what False Independence is, a mere slavery to self, and man's most galling bondage,—to know what is the True Independence which rests on the solid foundation of knowledge of God and self—to acquire the sense of Answerableness for all we say, do, think—these lessons we are here to learn. For this is Manliness.

We come here to learn it, we come here to practise it. The tender surveillance, the constant care of home, the hourly watchfulness of our younger schools are over for us. Here we have more freedom, here our steps are directed by well-marked lines, which nevertheless are by the right-minded scarcely felt as limits. Then will come the world



and that life in which nothing but a few outside matters will be controlled at all by the opinion of others. But never from unconscious infancy to the last breath of mortal air will God be ever one whit the less about our path, about our bed, or His eye less over all our ways ; and shall we become less strict with ourselves, because there stand fewer between us and God ? That thing—the growing less strict in our conduct as outward checks disappear—is the way in which a man destroys his independence, and substitutes for it vanity. It is because our strength ought to be daily growing greater, that guiding hands are little by little withdrawn.

But how fearful that we should rejoice in the removal of that support, unless it is because we are bent on using our strength more strenuously !

Will the wrecked sailor who is in the whirl of the last shoreward waves, from whom some rough breaker has torn away a mast or spar he clung to, will he strike out less vehemently because his support has gone ? He makes no mistake. He knows that by strength and well-timed strokes alone he can reach the shore.

To find ourselves alone and tempted is enough to cause us some fears, some sadness ; but sadness and fear are proof of weakness. True Independence in nothing more differs from Vanity than that it has a sense of weakness, a sense of need, a craving of strength from above. Foolishness is strong in its own sight.

The prophet, with all his Independence of character, ruling provinces, standing before Kings and reproving them, how did he behave when he was alone with God ? Remember his softness and tenderness, his window opened towards his home, and the man in prayer upon his knees three times a day there. Or think of him, as when in my text God's message came home to him, and he says, "There remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength."

It was because realities to him were real. Let us pray that we may not live as though the things of sight, touch, and taste were real, heaven and eternity shadows, but that

we may feel that God and God's law alone are real, and that usages, however prevalent, and principles, however accepted, which are not after God's Laws, will one day pass away, and leave us, if we have trusted them, solitary, helpless, and broken.

I am going to ask you to-day to give your gifts to the new little Church which is springing up in the midst of the increasing population, which this School has largely helped to bring into this lately almost wild Forest district. What is the sight of such a building rising anywhere but a kind of witness on the subject we have been speaking of! It witnesses that men alone will not go on wisely or well; that great sins and great guilt will dwell among them in their new homes, if men should desire to dwell alone. They know it well by old experience; therefore, wherever they go, they plant God's House among themselves, in however humble a form. The laws there read, the worship there rendered, the promises there preached, the grace there sought—they witness that only in obedience to God, only in listening to conscience by the knowledge of the Divine will, can men be really true to themselves, really strong; they witness that the only man-like Independence is to be found in Christ-like Obedience.

But it is on a remarkable day also that I ask your gifts. It rests with God, and with men's faithfulness to God, whether this day shall be one of the great days of European History, or whether it shall be in time to come a mournful reminiscence of a high purpose failing.

Some, perhaps all of you, know that some of the most eminent men in Germany, who belong to the Roman Catholic Church—appalled at last, and aroused by the last terrible and unchristian claim to the possession of personal infallibility advanced by the Roman Pontiff—are holding this week, with earnest, religious purpose, a conference in one of their great cities, along with Bishops of our own and of the Greek Church, and of the Reformed Episcopal Church of Holland. They are persuaded that these unlawful claims tend not to promote religion but the

slavery of the human mind, to destroy the love of Truth, to destroy the fear of God.

But what we anxiously wait to see is whether worldly motive, or traditional motive, or any lower interests, will still check the Independence of spirits that love His Truth. Will they, we earnestly ask, turn back to the first days and the first love? will they turn back to scriptural law of God, or will they be content with renouncing but one corruption, and will all else remain? Shall the Church of England which three centuries ago, simply and sincerely set before her the Love of Truth, have the great joy of beholding other nations pressing the same path (whether it be to precisely the same result is little in the issue), but setting the one aim before them of fearless desire to follow the doctrine of Christ; or will she have to sorrow at seeing them close the volume, and acquiesce in destroying one falsehood without desiring Truth beyond?

All these thoughts contain lessons for our own lives, as well as high musings upon God's dealing with the great world. Pray on, that in His heaven-wide Church, pray on, that in our Forest village, pray on, that in every boy's heart God may not only shed His Truth, but awake and foster the Love of Truth.

## SERMON VIII.

### THE REJECTED PROPHET.

1 SAMUEL xii. 20.

*"Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord."*

ONE of the most anxious questions which occurs to us in Christian life is this: How does God deal in this world with a sin which does not admit of being repaired although the sinner is most desirous to repair it?

It is a case that often occurs; naturally, therefore, it is likely to be a case contemplated in the Bible, and we do find it described there in different lights more than once.

No question is more trying for us to have to ask ourselves, nor is there one which we ask with more timidity and shrinking. When we bitterly repent of some misdeed, but know that we are powerless to undo it, then we ask, and often seem to ask ourselves, in vain,—Is this, then, a sin which *can* be forgiven? If the fault is irremediable, surely the doer of it is unpardonable. For what can repentance avail? Can God value a sorrow which has no power to enable me to undo what I have done?—a sorrow like mine, which is sorrow only, ineffectual sorrow? He may indeed forgive a sin which is a sin only against my own self, only within my own conscience, if I am really and deeply penitent, because then His discipline has produced its effect in bringing me back to Him. But if my sin has hurt another—if it has inflicted a disaster which can never, never be undone, what, is the use of sorrow there? How

can God attend to it when the evil is ever before Him?—the evil substantial, the sorrow only personal.

The glorious chapter of our text shows us God dealing not with a man, but with a whole nation. Yet it is a case in which only the scale, not the principles differ. God has not two ways of acting. Just as He dealt with all Israel when they rebelled against Him by establishing an earthly king against the divine order which He had appointed, so He dealt also with David after the great sin of his life.

Neither the national sin of the Hebrews nor the personal sin of King David could ever be undone, though both repented deeply. And God's course was this: He forgave freely, fully, absolutely, as only God can forgive. He forgave all the soul-guilt, remitted all the eternal anger which the sinful ones had drawn down upon themselves; yet still neither nation nor king were ever free from the temporal punishments of this life. He would not remember their sin for ever against them in the world to come, but neither did He interfere to snap the long chain of sorrows and troubles which they had forged for themselves in their days on earth.

As in David's case, for sinning against the sanctity the family and the purity of his own life, his remaining years on earth were years of family affliction and family corruption, so with Israel, all the national evils which Samuel had foretold came to pass. Oppression and extortion, and cruelty and war, vexed them under the kings whom they had chosen, and that owing to the politics of those kings. There came in religious apostasy, owing still to their personal influence; at last the royal sins dragged them down into the bitter captivity of Babylon.

Now every day we see around us the self-same law of God's dealing—sin really forgiven for ever, yet the temporal consequences of sin remaining, following the sinner to his grave, reappearing even in his children to the third and fourth generation. This is God's discipline, these are the laws of created things. We may be sure that God does not refuse the prayer of true repentance, even though we may

be every day reaping the fruit of sin. Our eyes may still look upward trustingly; our hands still labour at God's work whatever He gives us to do, though we may never be free from the sad consciousness that life and heart would have been very different round us and within us but for our sins; and that, whether they are sins which have not yet begun to bear fruit, but which we feel sure will not escape, or whether they are sins which have eaten into our hearts with a dreadful canker for years past.

Let us see how a great prophet and lawgiver and reformer once set forth this truth to his nation. Let us recall the place and scene and circumstances. Samuel, with the young king and all the people, were assembled in the low large plains between the high lands of Jericho and the Jordan. The place of meeting was a low green hill in those plains. It was the very same spot in which their forefathers made their first halt after they had crossed the river bearing the Holy Ark to take possession of their new home. Here they had rolled away the reproach of Egypt. Here there were still standing twelve large stones which, four centuries before, the twelve tribes had taken up out of the midst of the river-bed, and reared up grey and tall, far from the dwelling of man, to be a perpetual memorial of the nation's second birthday.

The scene to the eye cannot have been very different from the gatherings which our own most ancient forefathers held about the huge grey stones which they reared in memory of long-forgotten events; such as we still wonder at as we visit them among the lonely grassy hills of the oldest seats of religion and of law in these our northern islands.

But the crowd which stood round Samuel were sons of a purer faith and of a higher law than our fathers knew; and their old ruler and prophet, as he appealed to his own grey locks—"Behold, I am old and greyheaded," the grey locks which, Nazarite as he was, streamed to his very feet—as he appealed to his innocent and awful boyhood—"I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day,"—could speak to that multitude of things divine,

not as faintly guessed at behind clouds, but as things which he knew and was sure of. "I come," said he, "to reason with you of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which He did to you and to your forefathers."

He came, moreover, to perform a remarkable act of self-renunciation and self-deposition,—a very painful act after a life so long, so energetic, and so influential. He came to abdicate his power. He belonged to a generation whose very idea of their national existence was quite different to our own. 'For four centuries there had been but one thought. God alone was the King of Israel; His palace was among them; when they fought for righteousness He led them to battle. His victories had been heavenly miracles. When they wanted counsel, His ministers gave it direct from Him. Elders and judges, and princes and nobles, were to govern and do justice and seek peace, but the position they occupied was that of officers standing round the throne of God on earth. They were God's counsellors, God's ministers, the princes and the generals of God.

But the people, by long trains of sin, disobedience, self-justification, had weakened the tie between them and the Monarch, Who had hitherto been always ready to be consulted, always ready to espouse their just cause, always ready to judge the evil, to give oracles even about every-day matters to the distressed and needy.

Their habits had made it difficult for them of late to feel how near God was to them. They now desired to be exempted from this supernatural order of things, and to be reconstituted like other nations. The obligations were too noble for ambition. The ethereal air was too keen and pure for earthly breathing. They were willing to worship God as God (at least, so they thought), but on earth they wished for an earthly king and court.

There were, however, grander souls among them, and there was one man above all who suffered deeply at the growing feeling, at the unrepressed expression of their desire to be lower and not higher. And that man was their famous judge.

When the delegates stated the case to him "it was evil in the eyes of Samuel, and Samuel prayed unto the Lord." He was much more indignant for God's sake; but he could not but feel himself too aggrieved. God comforts him: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

Nevertheless, the desire was to be granted. Samuel, like our own greatest princes, places himself at the head of the revolution; magnanimously does his best to establish it in its perfection; does not retire from the scene; becomes neither a cynic nor an ascetic. He seeks and finds the prince, anoints him, proclaims him, serves and advises him. He takes the new burden on his own shoulders; is the first to submit to suffer under consequences which he alone foresaw.

The new prince is not at once received by all, but a great military success conciliates at last the disloyal. And then Samuel, as if he had not done enough already for the new system, deeply as he disliked it personally, sends out a proclamation of his own: "Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and there renew the kingdom"—seizing the happy moment when Saul's popularity was at its height.

This is a fine example of true loyalty; the crushing of personal feelings; the acquiescing bravely in an order which is established, and which we cannot change; the resolute purpose to work out and use the circumstances of our lives for the best, whether we like them or not; diminishing the evil, developing the good we find in them, but allowing no pique, no pride, even no principle of our own, to disgust us with the world, to narrow the sphere or diminish the force of our usefulness, or to make us think "this is not an atmosphere in which I can breathe and labour freely; I must either find a more congenial region, or I must be inefficient."

But his next act shows still greater dignity and solidity of character. Having thus assembled them, it being the very hour of Saul's triumph, Saul himself being there, as we read, and in full flush of triumph and high spirits,—  
"and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced



greatly;"—and being able to appeal to "the Lord's anointed as witness there this day," how did he use the opportunity?

Since he was determined to acquiesce in things as they were, does he begin to ingratiate himself with people or with prince? Does he win for himself a new position in their hearts, by the moving picture of his own services, his sacrifices, the sweetness of his yielding?

No. He made a stern strong speech to them; told them plainly of their rebellious course; did what is most hard to do: risked their affections to tell them the truth in their hour of self-congratulation. He reviewed the record of bygone sin and ancient sufferings; spoke of the iron hand of Sisera, the oppression of the Philistines, the invasion of Moab, then of their old repentances and their old deliverances, Gideon and Jephthah and his own days of youth and vigour. He roused them with the thought of Egypt escaped, and of the glory of Him who delivered them in the infancy of their race.

And all this great history, said he, had taught them *nothing*. The Ammonites had lately grown dangerous, they thought, so they would supersede God's kingdom and have a human brain, a human arm, to think and to fight for them.

Here, then, is their king before them; as a king let them obey him, but let king and people hear yet once more this warning for the last time at his lips, that warning which we know so well and forget so often, viz. that "There is one law of life through all space, through all time; that guilt brings sorrow, and sin brings punishment, and our sin is sure to find us out."

So spake, though in loftier words, that "good grey head which all men knew;" so spake he that day in Gilgal, and so speaks he for ever with the history of a great nation to point the truth of his word. And now let us think how Samuel is but an emblem of the way in which God Himself assumes and acquiesces patiently in the evil or sad state into which our sins bring us, and still gives a sign like a tender father that He is near us yet, though we have disappointed Him so far.

As then the still tranquil summer of Palestine was broken at the voice of Samuel in an unwonted way; thunder and rain sent from heaven in the midst of months which there knew neither storm nor lightnings: as then the terrors of God seemed to descend and invest Samuel himself when God thus hearkened to his voice, so that "all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel," so with us. We cannot sin a sin which changes our standing before God without a deep conviction of the change that is passed upon us, without an awful sense of standing within reach of judgment; and if hours of doubt and questioning torment us and enfeeble us; if ever we come to know that sharpest pain of having done some wrong which we can never, never repair; if by the ministry of good angels, or the direct work of His Blessed Spirit, He ever represents to us, not as a matter of words but as a startling reality—visible almost to our eyes—the infinite gulf that lies between sin and holiness, then may we have recourse to the last words of the grey-haired saint and prophet in the day of Gilgal:—

"Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord. . . Turn not aside after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver. . . The Lord will not forsake you. . . And as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: only fear the Lord and serve him in truth: . . . for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed" . . .

Beloved, let us mark four things:—

1. We have sinned some sins which we cannot repair. God in His great love takes us still as we are; takes us back to His bosom; only asks one thing, that at least we will go on in simplicity and sincerity now.

2. Though the temporal punishment may remain, it yet may be no sign that the sin is unforgiven. It is a difficulty in our way raised by ourselves. God takes us back though we are fallen; let us serve Him still, though the old vigour of the old days is gone.

3. This punishment is a sign, a sure sign of destruction

following unforgiven sin,—If God so punish those whom He receives as repentant, what will befall us if we repent not ? Surely nothing else than that “we shall be consumed.”

4. What an argument with us ought His long-suffering to be. If, when our folly and our sin have been so utterly inexcusable and inexplicable to ourselves that we look on these dear selves with a feeling not far from loathing, we yet know that they who know all have eyes out of which the light of love has not yet died, hands which will not relax their kindly pressure ; and the thought of kindred and of friends like these is yet availing us.

If without such falls we have come, we scarce know how, into an angered, fevered, fretted state of mind, under which the body itself groans and the spirit feels that too sore a temptation will break it down, and yet knows that to pray against temptation is a cooling breeze for the soul, and that a few days of repose will change bitterness into regret and regret into fresh energy :

If, again, our sins have been of that darkest dye of all in which we have tempted the weak, or forced the unwilling into degradation like our own ; if we know that thus we have been willing servants of the enemy of all good and deserve his wages, and yet we have some courage left to hope that confession and repentance may enable us to try to undo again that grievous error :

If neglected prayers have hardened any heart day by day, and neglected duty and neglected work have burnt into him like fire, filling him with a kind of sullen shame, yet making him reckless, pushing him on to more folly ; and if, after all, he has power to think that by and by he may renew heedfulness, steadfastness, and diligence ; and if sins before God and man such as I have mentioned, and others like them, affect, not one here and there, but trouble more or less the consciences of all, so that not the sweetest, not the purest, not the most steadfast of us all feels that the ruling power within him is the natural law of God ; and each knows that he cannot be restored to God without special grace for himself ; that there is no comfort whatsoever, not the least palliation, not the least hope of forgiveness, to be

found in the thought that many are as bad and worse, because he knows that, nevertheless, it is his sin which he has to bear, and that companionship in sin and sorrow is as much to be dreaded as companionship in pleasure and goodness is delightful :

If all these painful considerations aggravate our disquietude at our sin, and yet there is not one of them which does not seem to hint at and to reflect the thought that there is rest and renewal still to be hoped for somewhere if we can reach it :—Then what peace is in the thought of forgiveness so large, so full, so free, as God has promised.

Not friends, nor repose, nor confession, nor resumed prayer, nor resolution avail anything without the very presence of God ; but each of these things in Him may work us weal, and He in them can bring us absolution and perfect peace.

Let us press in them, but through them, and beyond them, beyond all inferior strength, press to the fountain head ; to that power which gives all powers their power ; to that inner eternal beauty which only makes all beauty beautiful ; that strength which, added to the weakest, makes the weakest strong.

In Him all ideals are real. In Him is the substance which casts on earth all the shadows that good men love of the true, the beautiful, the just, the good.

Let us come to Him to-day, and draw closer to each other at the same time, in the loftiest, purest ordinance with which we on earth can link ourselves to Him. Even to eat the bread of angels, and to drink in His presence the wine of His passion, that that presence may pass from being outside of us and be within us ; that we may know we are forgiven ; be humbly ready to bear all that our sins may have prepared for us while we live, and yet know that we are eternally forgiven for Jesus' sake, and be at peace in Him—at peace in Him.

## SERMON IX.

### THE CAPTIVE AMBASSADOR.

EPHESIANS vi. 20.

*"I am an ambassador in bonds."*

2 TIMOTHY ii. 9.

*"But the word of God is not bound."*

THESE two sayings of St. Paul are from letters written at an interval of not less than seven or eight years from each other. Both from Rome, one in his first imprisonment, the other in his second.

In the first he speaks as if he were feeling very deeply the difficulties under which he had to preach the Gospel ; he begs for the prayers of his Ephesian converts that he may have utterance given him, and be enabled to speak boldly, as he ought to speak. He was its Ambassador still ; but "an Ambassador in bonds" is almost a contradiction in terms. An Ambassador is received with all outward respect for his office, and for the dignity of his sovereign, however unwelcome may be the measures and policy which he has to promote. His vantage ground would seem to be lost when he is denied free access to the court, his office to be abrogated if he is put into bonds.

In the later epistle he mentions, with a somewhat similar allusion, the result of his continued experience—it was that though he was treated as a malefactor, though the Ambassador himself was in bonds, it had made no difference whatever to his cause. The word of God, the measures

which this Ambassador was to advance, had not been retarded. "The word of God is not bound."

The ministers of Christ ever since are more or less ambassadors in bonds. That is to say, they have not merely to contend with difficulties, but the difficulties they contend with are not fair ones. They do not get an equal hearing.

Often the difficulties unfairly cast in their way are the work of others,—a particular person has, as it were, power to encompass them with hindrances, by a meanly-obtained influence, by an invisible counteraction. Or some prevalent fault of the age or people is one which cannot be reached by open means, and must therefore by Christ's messenger not be reached at all. Or a dark shadow, as it were, follows even the advance which he may see made; and while his converts progress in personal holiness, they may lose somewhat of sympathy with others, so that while their own character grows purer their influence may contract itself.

But on the other hand, whatever difficulties from without beset the Ambassador of Christ, he knows full well that the greatest of his difficulties are within. That his own tongue falters when it should speak plainly; that his own standard of holiness varies even in his thoughts, much more in practice; that long habits of self-indulgence paralyse him when he would exhort others to self-denial; that faults of temper mar his work and lose him the confidence of others; and that in these and many other ways he loads himself with difficulty, rivets his own chains,—these difficulties he feels are unfair ones in the way of his Master's cause. He is an Ambassador in *bonds*.

Yet in the midst of all, this is his consolation: that though he is impeded, though he is less useful than he ought to be, the word of God is, after all, not bound. Yes; it will triumph over the difficulties we suffer or cause, even as over the chains of Paul.

This, then, is our confession, and this is our hope; and having spoken for ourselves, as called Ministers, we turn to you, and we ask you whether, in point of fact, you can consider yourselves as other than ambassadors of Christ?—

whether indeed you are ambassadors of Christ in any less degree than we are?

Our work we know changes as we advance in life. Like ambassadors we are sent to different courts; recalled from one, despatched to another. But are we not all, without exception, from the first years of sense and intelligence, distinctly, and without a metaphor, sent out as ambassadors of Christ in the midst of an adverse world?

I am sent by Him to do one work, another to do another; but is the very least among you not sent at all? Do you know any one amongst your boyish friends who is very wilful in disposition, or very weak in resolution, naturally inclined to underhand ways, or to be rash in speech? I will not go further. I only take these faults as instances. Well, it is very desirable, you will admit, that he should improve in those particulars. How, do you think, is his improvement to be effected? How is he to be brought to recognise that he has a Master in heaven? that he has a higher duty towards God than he feels as yet? Well, you hope that going on at school, being spoken to by the masters, suffering the consequences of fault, the sorrow and the prayers of home-friends, his confirmation by and by, will affect him so that he may change. But there is a shorter way than this, and a surer, a way without which all the other influences I have mentioned will but, as it were, go skin-deep; they may make him respectable outwardly, but we cannot be sure of their doing more, if they do even that.

The sure way I mean is that the spirit of Christ should enter into him and dwell in him.

And how does the spirit of Christ come? Why, it is a living spirit, and it passes from one living soul into another; it breaks from the lips of one in whom it dwells, and passes into the ear and heart of another in whom it as yet dwells not.

No doubt if one such careless boy could be persuaded to kneel down earnestly and pray earnestly by himself that the Spirit would come to him and change him, come He would. But how is the first step to be taken? How is he

to be persuaded to give up evil ways and to begin to pray? Surely, by God's Ambassadors—which Ambassadors are ye.

If a man could but persuade those who are thoughtful to look on their plain duty in this matter, those who are thoughtless would soon be persuaded. And this I know, that many who really are themselves thoughtful wear to other eyes the appearance of being, and even encourage the belief that they are, not truly thoughtful. They are guilty of this great injustice toward God, that while they wish to keep their hearts toward Him they are unwilling that others should know this of them.

But let me ask you what you think is the reason that we are Christians in this 19th century? How came it about? How has it gone on historically, as a matter of fact? Do you think it is due to us clergy? No doubt we are commonly the speakers, the mouth-piece; but who sends the clergy? Who provides the means by which so vast an army of speakers can be maintained, and sent about the world abroad, and established in every town and village at home? God forbid that I should say that half enough had been done as yet, especially in this wealthy, populous era, but the clergy could not have gone except they were sent. And they were sent of old, and are sent still, by a conscientious, God-fearing laity. And have that laity considered that they have done their duty, and discharged themselves of responsibility when they have sent those whose special business is to teach and preach? Surely not; that would be to undo with their own hands the work they are doing. The real spread of the Gospel has been by the young men and maidens, the old men and children of God's people living Christian lives, not fearing to express to friend or enemy Christian sentiments; supporting in heart and life and work those whom they depute to organise and administer such portions of the work as require a special organisation.

And so here. It is no disparagement to any place, however high its tone and principle and state of feeling, to say that its truest sons and most loving members would desire daily to see its standard of Christian truth and life rise



higher. But the life of a community will not reach a higher point, and all wishes will be but vain, if you leave Christ's Spirit to work through mechanically-appointed ways, and forget that you are His Ambassadors, each of you charged to do something for Him.

Christ has given us two commandments: will either of them have been kept in school-life if you have not acted as an ambassador of His?

The first commandment is, that you should love God with all your heart. Can you really love Him if you have not done something that others may love Him?

The second is, that you should love your Neighbour. Surely this is flagrantly disobeyed if you leave a neighbour unthought of, unprayed for; if you see him degenerate in tone, unlearn the lessons of his home and yours, and say, "It is no business of mine." Is this the love of your neighbour, then? Consider whether it is not your business in this point of view. Many will speak out loudly enough to lower the standard of feeling and practice. The atmosphere becomes tainted; others breathe it and are infected; and this infected atmosphere cannot be made wholesome but by the casting up into it of all manner of correctives, sweet and purifying odours, sharp and pungent aromatics. Unless you who have light and life and truth and strength on your side will, as it were, burn this purifying incense; unless you will utter, when there is need, the words of right and truth, which have but to be uttered in order to be loved by some fair though timid soul, and make your bold, sharp protests against sin, and cleave to and support and justify those among yourselves who are eager to do what they can, whether to correct or save, how can the standard of thought and feeling be as high as in your conscience you wish it to be?

And now let me take those objections which I have little doubt have risen in the minds of many about what I have been saying.

1. Some will say, "I am sure I should desire to be able to do something for Christ's name—and, young though I am, I am well aware that He expects it of me—but is it in

this way? Does He expect me to speak for Him to some one I know, who is careless about these things, who might not listen to me? Does He not rather wish me, while I am a boy, to learn to walk in His ways myself, and to set a quiet and good example; and will it not take a good deal of time from my proper work if I thus go beyond attending to my own work and character?"

I answer, No doubt it will take some time, to think what to say on any important matter and how to say it best, and actually to say it will take up a little time. But can you spend that particular time better? Allowing the widest space for work, for necessary exercise, recreation, food, rest, is there not still a considerable residue? times when thoughts are busy with all manner of unprofitable things, when words are busy too? Can you not give some of that thought and speech to the good of one who needs it sorely, and knows not that he needs it? And, again, suppose it took a great deal more than it really will take, the question is this, Is it not worth it? May it not make the greatest difference, a difference of lasting moment, in the mind and life of him to whom you speak?

If he will not listen or care, you have done your part. But how would you bear to look back when his character is fixed, when his position is irretrievable, and to think, "It might not have been thus, had I only spoken"?

2. And another objection you make is, "Personally I know that I am not well qualified to speak. I have the greatest difficulty in speaking about such things. Nay, even in praying I am tongue-tied; what to say even to my Creator and Redeemer, I know not very often,—to Whom I owe all that I am and have."

Well, what I have to say in answer to this objection is, No doubt it is so; but no one ever supposed that you would do it without difficulty. If you did, it probably would not be worth doing. I know very well what your difficulty is, but I never said you were a *free* ambassador. I said from the first you would have to struggle with difficulties both fair and unfair. You are an "Ambassador in *bonds*," no doubt. But your consolation is this, "that the word of God

is not bound ;" that the sacred power of what you have to say will triumph, however poorly you may be able to say it.

3. There is a more painful feeling still, which acts as an objection in my mind to what I have urged to-day. It is this : "I should like indeed, with all my heart, to say something that would do good ; that would in some degree fulfil my obligations, take up my Baptismal promises, do some honour to my Master's name, perhaps recall a wanderer to Him. But how can I? how can I? I who am conscious of such sin myself—such baseness, such broken resolutions—shall I not do more harm than good? Will not my tongue be paralysed while I speak, even if no taunting, well-deserved answer is made to me which will silence me for ever? My difficulty is not mere difficulty, but positive disqualification. I shall be a discredit to such a cause as Jesus Christ's."

I can only say in answer—and I say it with tears in my heart, tears of strong sympathy, strong consciousness of how much pain there is in that objection—and yet the answer is quite sufficient—Yes, it is too true : you are an ambassador in bonds. The difficulties are great ; the difficulties are such as may even rouse indignation in us. But we never said you were a free ambassador. There is risk in all noble attempts. The difficulty may be just overcome, the bar be only just surmounted ; but that is as good for our purpose as though walls fell down before us, or as if we floated proudly into harbour with a hundred fathoms of blue water underneath the keel. Though in bonds, an ambassador you are ; speak then in your Master's name ; remember that the word of God is not bound.

Nay, remember even that some bonds give you an advantage. They speak more eloquently than even the freest tongue. The message of an angel would be less affecting to a sinner than the message of one who has sinned and repented. Who could have spoken to some younger brother as the prodigal son could have spoken? Surely not he who had never transgressed his father's commandment.

## SERMON X.

### CHRIST'S THREE AIMS.

EPHESIANS iv. 8.

*"When He ascended up on high . . . He gave gifts unto men."*

IN the remainder of the passage which follows these words, St. Paul proceeds to say what the gifts were which Christ bestowed on men after His Ascension, and to what ends and for what persons He bestowed them.

These objects were specially three in number, and we shall do well to know them, for the knowledge of them is the key to a noble and true life.

I. He says (in v. 12) they are given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man."

That is to say, Christ then gave us special gifts in order that through an endless diversity of lives and works and thoughts,—through doing each his own particular duty, we may be all united to one another in one body which shall be pervaded and animated by the Spirit of Christ. The first grand object in our Lord's mind was and is Union among men, Union with God.

II. The second object which Christ our Lord had in view is: "That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby many lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth"—or as the margin

says, "being sincere—in love may grow up into Him in all things."

That is to say, His second object was that we should not be taken in with false ideas, but should know the truth; and that we should be in character sincere, and real—be what we ought to be and not wish to be thought what we are not.

III. The third object of Christ in giving us gifts from heaven is: "That we may grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, ~~even~~ Christ. From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measures of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in Love."

That is, then, His third aim, that by activity and energy we may ourselves grow up to our perfection.

These objects, perhaps, do not at present strike every one as they ought to do. It is not every one of you who can, or at least does, appreciate them in their fulness. But if they are really the greatest objects that can be, if they are so great that our Lord Jesus Christ crowned Life, Death, Resurrection, by pouring down upon us Gifts to enable us to reach those ends, then surely there is no one whose mind is so warped that he would not at least wish to understand them. Yes, who would not pray that he might be enabled to see them in their full consequence, and look at them with the eye of truth, and see them in the light in which Christ sees them?

Let us give to the thought of them to-day the few minutes set apart for these things; May He Himself be with us and give us the light and strength of His Holy Spirit.

Christ then through the power of His Ascension is helping us:—

1. To be united to Him.
2. To obtain steadiness through simple reality and sincerity.
3. To grow in spiritual strength by living lives of spiritual activity.

I. The first thing that strikes a stranger on seeing a

family is, "how much alike they are." On seeing a school, on seeing a regiment, the first thing the stranger says, is, "I should never be able to distinguish them." Then after a while, when you have grown familiar with ever so large a number of people, you wonder how you can ever have thought them at all alike. If you do not know every name, yet every figure and form is stamped with such an individuality that there is no confusing them. The members of your own family who at least have a great likeness to each other, seem to you to be all as different as possible. So it is with minds; so it is with characters. And both appearances are real. There is a great Variety, there is also a substantial Unity. But the Unity of minds and characters, of hopes and aims and aspirations, this is the really great thing. This is what the hopes of our race must be built upon; and what is far more important than everything else, it is in order that that Unity may be rich and full, grand and comprehensive, not formed on one little narrow type, but rich with all the fulness of God, that our individual differences of power and intellect and character exist.

As a rule we value ourselves on our diversities. We positively plume ourselves, not merely on superiorities, but on mere differences from one another. And that without ever asking ourselves, "Why am I different? To what end is this difference given me? How am I bound to find out its use and apply it to the general good?" God makes nothing in vain. If He has made me different from my friend in this point of character it is surely that I may supply something in him. If my friend is different from me it is not that I may find that point of difference a detachment, but that he and I together may effect something for each other and for others which separately we could not accomplish. As our sphere in life grows wider and wider we can make no worse mistake than to estrange ourselves from those who differ from us and to gratify the first impulse towards isolation. The wider our sympathies are, the more considerate we are in the way of making allowances so as to avoid alienations, the more we determine

not to unlink our own efforts from those which lie not quite in the same line as ours, then so much the more are our efforts effective, force is economised, fuller results reached, we ourselves delivered from one-sidedness.

And how does this lift us up above weaknesses, littlenesses, pettinesses in daily life—things which seem sometimes ready to devour our very being and whirl life into vexatious eddies! How does such a view warn us against bursts of temper which make others necessarily distrust us, against undue sensitiveness which makes others afraid of approaching us, against sullenness which paralyses us in our work because we do not get exactly the reward we think we deserve, or exactly at the time we fix on! How does it warn us against looking coldly on the work of others because it is not wrought after our pattern!

Again, if we lift up our eyes and look still more widely afield, what is the great work that the Church itself is set to do, but to reconcile all the Diversities of men in one great Unity? not to abolish diversities but to give each its field of energy. In the days of the Apostles one preached, another supplied the daily necessities of the poor, another wrote words of lasting guidance, another governed, another travelled,—all recognised these various functions as given but for one end, to work out the Unity of man in God. And still we have to group ourselves, both according to our differences, and according to our likeness, until every difference of natural endowment, policy or national character, shall have its true place and its work within the universal Church.

Very far away is that vision, yet it is not vain for us to keep it from fading away before our eyes, if it only stimulates us to hope for the fulfilment of God's promises, and makes us feel that we each have our work to do in helping, encouraging, co-operating with each other, not standing alone in coldness or in selfishness.

II. The gifts of Christ to us are directed to producing in us "Steadiness of character through Reality." We are to measure ourselves truly. We are to measure our opportunities truly. We are to get rid of self-deceptions; to get

rid of fantastic imaginations that more opportunities of good lie out of our path than in it.

1. How common it is for earnest persons to fancy that a wide gulf exists between their capacities for doing God's service and the opportunities which He affords them. But who is to be sure that this is not in reality a very specious form of murmuring against God? Who could be sure of this until he had assured himself of two other things—that he sees and knows accurately all the opportunities which are given him, and then that he had exhausted them all by fulfilling them as adequately as God intends?

For nothing more than for a true faculty of vision do we need to use earnest prayer. We read in the Bible of men's eyes being opened, so that they found themselves surrounded by circumstances, and by Presences too, to which they had been blind. Now it is the presence of an angel; then of a company of angels; or even of the Lord Jesus Himself, that is revealed to those who were troubling themselves or hardening themselves because they fancied either that the circumstances around them, or the task before them, lacked strong divine interest, or that God had averted His eyes from them because they had not chosen some different path. They were not conscious of the gentle hand that lead them. They longed to have felt some sharp pressure upon their will, or themselves to have taken some strong and (as it would have been) really wilful step in life which they had had no chance of taking.

"To serve God" is the desire of many. "*To serve God as God wills*" is the glory of the few. But it may be given to all of us if we will really consider what more may be done for the joy, the peace, the salvation of the uninteresting every-day souls, which are all that some can see in eternal beings of infinite capacities whom Christ exalted by loving them, whereas to treat them as uninteresting is the way to make them so.

2. Another, and a very easy yet a very lowering habit of mind and life, which interferes still more with that "steadiness through reality" of which we are in quest, is



what I may perhaps venture to call "Frivolity in the very discharge of earnest Duty."

How many there are who after choosing to themselves duties which are really very earnest and which have drawn out the energies and ennobled the character—no less than glorifying some of the greatest or the holiest men we have read of, and being glorified by them—yet find life utterly dull.

Even the poor routine of some mechanical life, a seemingly lost waif in the alleys of a town, a clerk's in an office, a soldier's in time of peace in the dreariest barracks, have we not read of such lives having been thus 'glorified? Yet there are many most noble occupations which ought to have almost of themselves this inspiring power, that are not glorified at all by those who use them and that seem to have no elevating effect upon their characters; leave them still petty and easily disturbed and selfish men.

Now one cause which thus undermines the effect which God intends our occupations to have upon us in raising us is undoubtedly to be found in secret impurities of the thought and imaginations of the heart.

Nothing so protects a man—awful thought—from the influence of God's Spirit. Nothing so effective in shutting out realities from his view. Nothing so absolutely certain to prevent his acquiring that steadiness which truth of knowledge and truth of thought and truth of the will bring with them.

But second only to this in its miserable blighting effect, is to have chosen earnest duties for our life's work and then to engage in them, to approach them, or prepare for them in a frivolous, light, unprayerful spirit. To be aware that "sufficiency for them can only be of God," yet not really to look to Him for that sufficiency, or to ask Him but now and then in formal hasty words; to glide adroitly past a difficulty, and let it slip down the stream with him who is involved in it; to trifle with an occasion which may be the turning-point of some character that at the moment leans on ours; to laugh away a crisis which may be another's agony. Dearly beloved, are not these

circumstances true to the lives which every one of us has to lead as a member of a society like this,—more or less responsible according to his position in it, yet not one of us irresponsible to both God and man with a weight that nothing save the help of Christ's hand can lighten?

How great is the temptation to us; seeing how much has to be done, and then how free the intervals of relaxation are;—how great the temptation first, to bury ourselves in the rush of work, feeling as if we must be doing our duty, because every moment is so busy—without reflecting that there is a spirit in every moment, a spirit in every toil according to whose presence and absence the work itself is worth doing or is valueless: and next to bury ourselves in the rush of enjoyment, feeling that we have earned it, without considering that pleasure also is God's gift, and that pleasure without thankfulness is hollow indeed.

Such lives of rushing work, of giddy enjoyment, wear out their wheels at last. Then they stand still, and the latter half of the day is a sunless journey, that must still be pursued, if not with a heart-ache, yet with the false feeling, earned by false beginnings, that work is profitless and the world dull and life ugly.

The end of a life like this is sad enough and sober enough—yet it is no more real than its fantastic commencement.

In youth the man “walked in a vain shadow,” in age “he disquieteth himself in vain.” He has secret misgivings upon all truth. His principles are conventional. His religion has become a pathetic sentiment.

I truly believe there never was a time when earnest duties were more freely undertaken; never a time when men were more ashamed of doing nothing; never a time when it was so much the fashion to work very hard and to talk a great deal about it. Every one must be busy with something. But I also believe that there never was a time when so many earnest duties were undertaken so lightly and unpreparedly, and pursued with so much unthinkingness and such an absence of self-discipline in any real spiritual sense.

These are not questions that concern men of the world alone, men who are grown up, who have made their choice and see their responsibilities full before them.

Who of you is so young that he knows not the kind of responsibilities which rest on him. Does he know how his own truthfulness or untruthfulness, his own self-control or self-indulgence, his own sensitiveness to honour or the way in which he blunts that sense, his own lively response to good motives or his own apathy, affect one and another who has to do with him? Then he knows full well that he is not irresponsible for what he expresses, or for what he does, for one single hour in any day.

Does he know the sin that may spring up out of one single word? Does he know the difference that it makes to a young intellect in process of formation whether that intellect willingly exerts itself or no? Does he know either the self-denial which has placed him here, or the home-love which follows every syllable that is said about him, whether it is in praise or dispraise, or the hopes that wait on him, or the misgivings which make some heart throb that has watched a wilful or a careless childhood? Then we must add to what we said before, that not only is he full well aware of the earnest duty that lies before him, but he knows equally well that no duty can be substantially done in any spirit of frivolity, with a prayerless heart, or a callous conscience.

May we all take to our hearts and to ourselves St. Paul's lessons of the Ascension this day; Oneness in Spirit, Growth through Activity, Steadiness through Reality—open eyes, steadfast wills, and loving hearts.

## SERMON XI.

### NO ANSWER FROM CHRIST.

MATTHEW XV. 23.

*"But he answered her not a word."*

OUT of many lessons to be drawn from the terrible and touching narrative of the Gospel of this second Sunday in Lent, there are three which especially seem to need a few words to be said on them in a school at a time when a Confirmation is being prepared for.

And those lessons may be taken from what we read of the Mother, what we read of the Daughter, what we read of the group of Disciples; or rather, from what we read that each of these was in relation to the God-Man who stood among them, and how His conduct showed with respect to them.

1. With respect to the Disciples. We may learn from what is not written as well as from what is written, what a lesson they received upon *want of sympathy*. They fancied they understood the whole question, and that they could read in our Lord's unfathomable expression the image of their own cold hard thoughts. Here is a woman, say they, who has no claim whatever on the consideration of our Master, and she pursues Him with cries as if she had a right to be heard. Her daughter is affected by an evil spirit. But all these idolaters, these Gentiles, give themselves up to the worship of evil spirits,—and then their lives are so vicious; it is according to the very order of nature that they should be in the power of those to whom they

surrender themselves morally and spiritually. What claim has she upon our Holy Master? And then they looked at His calm face, His eyes fixed on some distant inward sight, and in the silence they heard the echo of their own imaginations, and with confidence they came and besought Him saying, "Send her away, for she crieth after us. Do not permit yourself or us to be pursued with this clamour. Put an end to this painful scene."

Are there not parallels to this kind of conduct among Christians still? Granting that this very history has taught Christians a wider sympathy with victims even of their own sins than was possible for Jews; just as that other history of Christ's similar rebuke to the same Disciples about the approach to Him of young children has taught us a sweeter charity towards the ignorant and innocent, and makes us feel that in them there is a something not only not to be despised, but to be envied and imitated so far as we can copy it: granting that in modern times we have more tenderness towards bodily suffering and mental incapacity, witnessed to by countless institutions, yet still there is among us, even among the thoughtful who wish to follow Christ Himself, a suspicious hardness toward some who are taking their first steps toward improvement after long misconduct. Their steps are very tottering. I will say more, they are very troublesome; nay, sometimes they are presuming. Such persons seem to expect that if they show the least tendency toward improvement they are at once to be accepted, as having made their claims complete. I allow all this, but yet the right attitude towards them is still a kind and favourable and encouraging one. Cold looks and silence and the ready sentence that he has stamped himself for his school life, are not doing Christ's work. There is a contrast between Christ and us when we so act—a strong contrast.

We do not read that any more words passed between our Lord and His disciples on the subject of this troublesome woman. But what a veil fell from the eyes of these men (so satisfied that they were doing their own duty and the will of their Master) when a few moments later they

heard Him exclaim, "O Daughter, great is thy Faith." The very quality which our Lord was always telling them was so necessary for them, and so wanting in them, lay in a rich overflowing store in the heart of this heathenish woman.

2. The second lesson which will suit us well just now, is the teaching of Perseverance in Prayer.

I believe that there are those here who may do themselves great spiritual good if they study this character, and adopt something from it. I well believe that there are those who have been trying to pray in the last few weeks more earnestly than they ever did before.

On the other hand, I am sure there are those who have not persevered in praying in earnest, and have sad reason to be sorry for it. They have not aspired to any very high standard (they would say), but they fixed their own standard high enough to command their own respect and the respect of others; and, to their surprise, they find they have lost both the one and the other.

Another flings lightly and carelessly away the opportunity of special grace; the demands on him are not more than he can meet by the principle of honour and straightforwardness.—You will find that there are eddies and whirlpools in every society, which, if you are a careless swimmer, will catch you unawares. You are involved deeper than you know. Courage fails at the sight of an unforeseen difficulty. You try to fall back on your ordinary principle, but what have you been doing all this time to strengthen and feed that ordinary principle? You find it too weak; you suddenly see a reason (so you think) why you should this once trust to another principle, lower than that which you have been proud of till now; it is done, and the lower standard is taken, and no one will let you again vindicate your claim to be actuated by the higher.

But there is among us a large class who are taking quite a different line. There are those who pray sincerely that day by day the daily bread of God's grace may strengthen them with a higher strength, and His Spirit shed on them a fuller light. But they do not feel stronger. They do not

find themselves more clear-sighted. Doubts seem to increase; temptations to grow stronger; powers of resistance, even reasons for resistance, seem not to come just when they are wanted; we pray and we feel exactly as this woman did; we feel as if Jesus did not answer us a word. Then we cast about for various solutions. We say, perhaps, "Is God, after all, in His greatness and goodness, a God who lets things take their course? Or have I offended Him so deservedly that I must not expect a hearing, have I yielded to such a weakness so long that there is no strengthening me, have I hardened my heart till I cannot turn though I wish?"

Now, the history gives us a picture of a person in our state of mind; that is, misled by appearances, (1) from want of knowing enough of Christ, and (2) from not yet having risen (although we may think we have) to that intensity of earnestness and full stretch of faith of which our nature is really capable. There is in Christ (and we must not only admit it, but rejoice in it), the stern goodness of a man of powerful insight; not the softness which, without doing any good, lavishes blessings before they are appreciated; but, as I say, that paternal sternness which will have us brace ourselves up for a resolute effort, sustained effort. The prodigal son has a father's welcome, but he must come *home*; he must come all the way. Like this woman, we may hear the words "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt," but not till we have deserved the earlier words, "Great is thy faith."

Perhaps we are not praying altogether in a right tone when our prayers are unanswered.

This woman, coming as a heathen, appealed to Him as "the Son of David," as if her mere use of the earthly title of Messiah—a title in which she herself could have no share, and which could give her no claim—might act, as it might on earthly ears, and win His attention to her acknowledgment of His majesty. But to our Lord it was in vain. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." "*As Son of David* my charge is of the House and people of David. Lost though they be, wanderers ever so far,

*they* would be mine ; but thou *under that name* art none of mine."

Do we not ourselves sometimes come to Christ with something of this sort? And is it not an excluding of ourselves if we do? and a reason why we may have no answer? In our prayers we must be on our guard against the least touch of insincerity. I do very seriously recommend the use of good books of devotion, such as are very numerous and very holily and well designed. I think we want to be taught how to pray, and helped in our efforts to pray as much as in anything else. But it is almost certain that books of prayers written by one person will not be exactly suited to another. If they were—they would not be so good as they are. But you may easily, and should, observe phrases and expressions in them which are not adapted strictly for your own person and position. Other expressions are not there which you would wish naturally to use. I recommend you to be careful, in praying, to make necessary changes in the books you use. Do not use anything which you may find forced or unnatural ; if it is only above you, you will grow up to it hereafter ; if it is not appropriate to you, how can it be answered? She who was not of David's people could not claim the protection of "David's Son." It was a conventional phrase only to her, and meant nothing, and so availed nothing.

But then there came from her heart a deeper cry. She would throw herself on nothing but her need ; she would not insist on her faith. It was that anguished cry which week after week breaks from the lips of thousands as the last billow sweeps over them, or the fire-damp comes choking them, or the volley flashes for the instant, or the terrible message is spoken by kind lips, that there is no hope. It is the agony of human nature, feeling that it possesses but one thing—and that one a want. "Lord help me."

But He draws still in answer a terrible picture of human thanklessness. Travellers tell of the wild dogs which, without a master, used to scour the Eastern towns. They owned no one, and were not owned, they devoured till there



was no more ; they would hunt down the lonely child who had given them his piece of bread. "Is it *thus* you ask." He seems to say, "The Children of that David of whom you spoke are lorded over by heathen. Do you now come for the children's bread? And will you be as thankless and as masterless?"

Her beautiful answer lives for ever as one of the great sayings of humanity. "Name me as you will, I do not remonstrate. The bread is the children's ; let them have it. But the men are the dogs' masters after all. The men do suffer them and do need them and do use them. And the dogs do eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table."

It is indeed only in the beginnings, the first beginning of our faith, that we need adopt such language, when after grievous sin we turn back to our Master's table. Lightly to take her language into our own lips would be perhaps to misuse it, an instance of the unreality which I would have you avoid. But you, while you are about His table as children who are at home in their father's house, do you not often forget that there are those to whom you deny even the crumbs? How common it is for boys; through mere folly and boastfulness—boys who have good principles too—to let their inferiors, younger ones, servants, tradespeople, aiders and helpers of every kind, without whom they could not enjoy their comforts, or even have their necessities met,—to let such persons, I say, see only the worst side of them. The reckless manner and talk and conduct put on to make an impression and give an idea of consequence or independence, or a hard, insolent mode of directing them, or a threat which they know will never come into act, or perhaps a bribe to secure connivance, or to procure a comfort at some other's expense ; all this outside folly and vanity and selfishness is perhaps the whole of your character and conduct which is ever visible to many and many who needs must look to your class in life for their tone. You are "verily guilty concerning your brother." There ought to be crumbs falling from the table spread for you by Christ Himself. You ought

to let the goodness and the sweetness and the honour and the kindness which you learn and practise in other circles not sit on you as a surface gloss, but be the genuine expression of a character which, formed by Christ, is always and everywhere the same.

Lastly. We have something to learn even from the Daughter. What it is, is pointed out very plainly and undisguisedly in the Collect and the Epistle which is used with this Gospel. The daughter was at home grievously vexed with a devil. And the Collect prays that we may be defended by God's guardianship "from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul." That is, the Collect assumes that spiritual and physical evil have ultimately one and the same cure. One is wicked, we know, and another suffers in the world very often. And those who are afflicted in health or circumstances, in mind or spirit, have others to thank for their afflictions. But that is because we really are all one, all men are one body; sins here break out in consequences there. The time is yet to come in which all the consequences will be brought down on the right heads, and all the sins visited upon the doers; and meantime things are only leading to that consummation and have not yet brought it to pass. And so it may be that this Demon-tormented girl was no sinner above the rest. It may be that the misery which flowed in upon her was a stream of which others had drawn the sluice, and the day of God's equal judgment was not come. But the spectacle daily before the mother's eyes was the fruit of sin somewhere, and that sin was the fruit of "evil thoughts," against which we are taught to pray for God's defence. We need not seek to fathom those depths of Satan which would appal us if we could look upon what that mother's portion was. There was in her own child something destructive to the peace and the honour of life, something which poisoned the springs of good feeling and kindly thought, of truth and pureness, and made the pulses of life beat strong only when there was some malice to be achieved, or something execrable attained.

And if it was not (as there is no reason whatever to suppose it was) a visitation upon individual evil, all the more fearful is the warning against all sin. Sinful words and sinful deeds shot into the air, seen, told of, repeated, encouraging others: can you tell how far they will run? Can you tell down what valley that stream will speed, swollen by twenty other reckless torrents? Can you tell what mischief they will do, over what hearts they will spread, what wild work they will make there?

Let us sum up. \*

1. Evil thoughts to be intensely guarded against as the ultimate source of all the sin and misery of this world.

2. Genuine prayer to be persevered in, in spite of the silence and discouragement which seem to hinder our first efforts, but are only meant to make us more genuine and more intense.

3. Sympathy with others' sufferings, care for others' good, the first step of the Disciple in following his Master.

## SERMON XII.

### THE RESTORER OF THE SHRINE.

NEHEMIAH iv. 17, 18, 21.

*“They all builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one—with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. . . . So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning until the stars appeared.”*

THE restoration of God's Temple by the armed labourers of Nehemiah is a familiar and noble illustration of the restitution of the spiritual Temple—“which Temple are ye,” says St. Paul. It is a vivid example of the way in which, in this world, all highest and holiest work is done for God. Such work does not glide evenly onward, every stroke telling, every effort at once repaid. Steadfast labour through trouble and hindrance is the method by which at once His high purposes are accomplished and His servants disciplined and perfected. What saint has ever yet found himself in circumstances which allowed of his “attending upon the Lord without distraction”? What hero ever felt that his vast plan prospered as it might have done had all they on whom he depended co-operated with him earnestly?

How says St. Paul himself that the greatest work that mortal ever undertook, the conversion of the world, was wrought? Not in an unchecked course of serene success, “prospering and still prevailing,” but “in weakness and in much trembling,” “fighting without and fears within,” “insomuch that we despaired even of life.”

Why? Because failure and disappointment are, as well as encouragement, the instruments which God uses. He seeks not only the result of the labour He enjoins (that He could accomplish by a word), but the discipline of the labourer also.

But if such is the witness of every age; if prophets and apostles and reformers, leaders of civilization and improvers of man's estate, the promoters of God's glory in every age, bear witness as they sink down, generation after generation, to the law that the most diligent labour cannot find here its rest or reward; the same truth is witnessed to for us in those "miniature worlds," as they have been called, our own souls.

According to no other rule than this can we work out our salvation, restore the defaced stamp of God, revive the purity and simplicity which we have lost, perfect to its integrity the ideal which Christ sets before us.

Whether we look on those old Hero-saints reviving from the dust of the Kingdom of God, or on those among ourselves who raise to Him a no less worthy shrine in their living hearts, everywhere there is the same sight, everywhere a Temple to rebuild, everywhere imperfect means to work with, and foes to hinder it and mock at it.

We can labour with but one hand, as it were; the other is on the hilt of our sword the while.

(1). If we are "Temples of the Holy Ghost" at all, as St. Paul assures us lovingly that we already are, we know this:—that we are not perfect, well built, undefiled shrines. If Temples at all, we are Temples that have been broken down, wasted with fire, subject to the contumely of traitor and foe; we have lost the gold and silver which once richly overlaid our nature; have been spoiled of the heavenly beauty both of soul and body which our first father had; we have lost the vision of God and our natural conversation with Him; our fall has stripped us of our original righteousness, so that we sadly fear Him, and seek to hide ourselves from Him whom it were natural that we should most dearly love.

The ruin of the first Temple, the captivity of the land,

the surrendering of the sacred hill to the lion and the wolf, are faint images of the despoiling of the glorious heart of Adam, "which was the son of God," and of the bondage of his sons, and the overrunning of these minds and wills of ours by violent passions and unreasonable and foolish impulses.

But though so much be lost, thank we our God that even in our souls there is a remnant left. The foundations of that first building are yet traceable. The plan of the Heavenly Architect is discernible among the waste and crumbled heaps, beneath the nettle and bramble that have overgrown them. If the skyward roof is gone, and the tall and shining pillars lie low, we may yet set our feet on the unstirred marbles of the pavement. We may yet, as we gaze on the natural heart of man, and mark its capacious thought, and its subtle energies, and its lofty ambitions and aspirations—we may yet, as it were, ride with Nehemiah in the night around the walls and say, "Here was the Dragon Gate, and here the Gate of the Fountain, and here the place of the King's High house, and yonder the wall of the pool of Siloam."

But (2) this were poor comfort if this were all. Little would it profit to know how glorious the past had been, if we believed that its glory had departed never to return.

In the old time of which we speak it was dawning anew. There was a people once more at work to raise up the old decayed places, and to restore the ancient and beautiful house in which their fathers praised God. And mark, this people was not a new nation of "occupiers," but the same that held it of old. If they were no more the proud unbroken race, they were a free people, a ransomed and liberated nation. Partly they had been set free by the Great King, without money and without price; partly they had been bought from other masters with the money of their Prince Nehemiah, with all that he had to give. He who in self-sacrifice and zeal was so bright a type of Christ had pleaded for the freedom of his people (as we read) with many tears; had himself paid the price for those that could

not otherwise be free ; had gone before them in the way, and brought them to their own land again.

Thus they were a ransomed and restored people. And to us surely the application is very plain. We too have been set free ; not without the strong crying and tears of our Saviour and our Prince ; nor that we may leisurely enjoy His realm, but be active and able lords of our own, and in His spirit and by our labour restore in ourselves that holiness and glory which we have lost.

(3). The Rebuilding was a very different scene from the first building. Of old, in profound peace, in wealth, in joy, the Temple, and the king's house, and the city walls had risen higher and higher. Princes brought their glory and honour into it. The marbles were hewn out of the mountains, the cedars floated down the sea, the gold came in from Ophir. Not otherwise, God first made man the crown of all His works, gave him a spirit to worship, a lofty mind to know, a pure heart to feel, a perfect body to perform His will in all perfection.

And as there was no sound of axe, nor hammer, nor saw, while the House was in building—no jarring, grating noise, no turmoil as of earthly trouble, to mar the busy silence in which the First Temple was set up on earth, so we read of our own beginning—how in the tranquil, rainless garden, eastward in Eden, where was every tree pleasant to the eye and good, watered with the mist of the fourfold river, “the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Then He blessed him, and made him lord of all.

Far different is our life from that beginning, different as the rebuilding from the building of the Temple. Now they laboured as they might : where once all was security and brightness, now there was mistrust and gloom. The work had to be done with what speed it might under so many hindrances, with what poor materials they could find, with what uneven masonry the unskilled workmen could compass ; but above all they had to stand to the work sword on side, and armour-bearer behind holding shield and

spear, "from the rising of the morning until the stars appeared."

For they laboured sore beset : savage, taunting foes about them and among them. Hard it was while they were labouring for God to see loitering along the wall, and clustering in knots in the valley, and pitching their tents on the green sward of their own Temple courts, hordes of Arabians and Ammonites, whose cruel eyes, and bitter Eastern tongues, and desert-dried sinews, and fleet steeds, would have made less gallant hearts fail, and did make all work an anxiety and almost a desperation.

We read how the Samaritan jeered at the thought of their reviving the calcined stones out of the burnt rubbish, and how the Ammonites mocked their bad building, and told them that "a fox as he ran over it would throw it down." And the Arabians came and said nothing, but sate quietly down by the black tents of Kedar and handled their long lances and waited for the signal to fall upon Jerusalem.

It has been, and it is even so with us ; nor can we expect it otherwise. How far off and how fair is the story of the First Foundation of this House of ours ! How painful do we daily find the process of its Rebuilding ! Evil men and evil spirits fain would hinder the Restoration of our holy City and of the Temple that is in our hearts. If we were content to dwell in our ruined habitation as it is, to let it crumble on, the rents widen, and the weeds gather over it, and if we would eat, drink, and be merry among the ruins, all our enemies of this world and of the next would like us well. They would make merry with us even up to the very hour when it suited them to turn and slay us.

But because we will not have it so, because we are bent on restoring God's lost image in our souls ; because we are determined to raise up a holy altar within us, to clear away foul growths and clinging creatures from the shrine, to cast up defences against the foes of man and God, therefore the enemy is very wroth with us. He terrifies us sometimes by the sight of his power, by the hold he



has on the wide world ; he breaks our hearts sometimes by mocking us.

It is with us as with Christian the Pilgrim in the parable, as he passed through the dark Valley. There came forth "things that cared not for Christian's sword ;" there were "rushings to and fro, so that sometimes he thought he should be trodden down ;" sometimes "he knew not his own voice, when an evil one stept softly up to him . . . and whisperingly suggested many grievous things which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind."

How full of truth and character are the incidents which meet us in the story of Nehemiah and his haters (in the fourth chapter) ! How lucid is the parable in which they seem to be the very incidents of our own lives !

How often when we have tried to do good to some friend and neighbour—when we have knelt apart to offer our heart to God more perfectly—we have heard a voice as mocking as the Horonite's, saying, "You do any good? You fortify? You sacrifice? You do all in a day? You revive strength and feeling in that worthless, wasted heart?" We have not laboured hard or long if we know not that wicked whisper in our breasts.

Again, when we have made, not without tears, some strong resolution, and then perhaps broken it in a day, and we are in an agony, and are slowly setting to work again to try to resolve once more, perhaps we have heard the laugh of some thoughtless friend, or else a laugh that comes from we know not where within us—"That which he builds, if a fox go up, he shall even break down the walls."

Therefore there is but one thing for us to do. We must build our walls sword on side. We must be prepared to turn even fiercely on our spiritual foe ; and, then, like those men of old, let us above all have some good friend to stand beside us and hold our spear and shield one day, while we hold his the next—one who will help us with good thought and word when we need advice and help—aye, a friend who will simply put into words the good

voices of our own souls, who will check the gathering evil when it first shows itself in some hasty, unworthy word. How strong are they that seek and keep such friends, "For as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the countenance his friend."

(4). Lastly, though this our temple be rebuilding at such disadvantage, in a way so different from its first rise, yet the promise is for us good also as of old, "That the glory of the latter house shall after all exceed the glory of the former." That shall be more precious which is restored at the price of such trouble and pains, than that which was founded in wealth and ease. Man reformed after his fall shall be greater and holier than unfallen man. Redeemed he shall stand higher than when untempted.

And there was a greater glory still in reserve for the Second Temple, for this was it which Christ in the flesh honoured with His Own presence. So with us. Adam was God's creation, but God was external to him. We are God's *Redemption*, and He has promised to dwell in us, and that we shall dwell in Him.

And as Nehemiah, the great and loving Prince, stood beside his builders, and had with him one to sound a trumpet on every alarm, so is Christ with us. He is not far from us. He is among every two or three. When the enemy approaches He sounds the warning note in time. Then, as they to Nehemiah, so must we draw nigh to Him. "In what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us. Our God shall fight for us."

Often you are nearer danger than you suppose; miss not the voice of the Herald; you know He would not call you to His side for nothing. Whether he sound the alarm by His holy Word, by the events of our lives, by the speech of friends, by the thoughts of our minds, arise we at once, even in the midst of duty, and seek His will more perfectly.

But He not only calls us to Him, He comes to us: so dear He holds us and our work. He will not only stand and watch, while we labour in armed isolation far from one another, and bid the Heavenly Trumpet sound from time

to time. The hour comes fast when the true labourer shall see Him beside him in his work.

“ Be the day weary, or be the day long,  
At last it ringeth to evensong.”

If we begin like the sons of Judah to build with the rising of the morn, the stars will appear at last ; and as we near the evening of faithful days, a majestic figure will stand beside us, even as the Prince of Judah went at evening round the walls to see and to commend each man's work. He will come silently and suddenly, while shades are falling fast, and foes drawing nearer, and we shall know Him because we know what He has borne for us, for we shall not only see His hair and His robe wet with the dews of night, but we shall see—we shall see a bright wound-print on the Hands held out to us, and on the Foot that comes from beneath the long white robe—we shall see these things and we shall know that it is our Master.

Then may it be ours to hear one word, as He looks upon our work, and sees that it is clean, and smooth, and firm, and strong, and lasting—

“ Well done, good and faithful servant !  
Rest now from thy labours :  
Rest, and thy works shall follow thee.”

## SERMON XIII.

### THE PROGRESS OF THE AGES.

1 St. JOHN iii. 23.

*“ This is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another.”*

To Believe in the name of Christ, and to Love one another, is the summary of Faith and Practice which answers in the Christian Church to the old Commandment that we should love God and our Neighbour. It is, as St. John says, “ the same Commandment which was from the beginning,” and again it is a “ New Commandment.”

It is a New Commandment because it is an advance in spirit and an advance in knowledge ; but an Old Commandment because spirit and knowledge are not changed, only amplified. Under the old Law the Neighbour who was to be loved was separated by a high wall of partition from the rest of mankind, and the God who was to be loved and served was very far away, and to be approached through ordinances of service and a worldly tabernacle. But in the new Commandment, the love of one another allowed no child of man to be excluded, and God was made known as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, Who being in the bosom of the Father revealed Him. This was the change, the advance, which the ages had received. Higher towards God was the human spirit mounting, wider through the great earth was the human heart flowing. Nearer to God, nearer to Man. Not only a Commandment at once old and new, but a possibility and a gift ; a gift from the Father through the Son and in the Spirit.

History, as it has been well expressed in finished words, "is the record of the successive manifestations of Truth in the life of men and man." Each new Truth as it comes does not wander on alone through a sandy waste, but reaches and swells the great river; and the influence of Truth on the thoughts and lives of individual men is an influence never lost in the life of our whole race, so that again as the same author has said, "The present, if we could read it rightly, contains the past and the future; though that which is real and abiding is enveloped in a mass of confused details, so that it is visible only to the eye of the true seer."<sup>1</sup> Could the seer who wrote the glorious Psalm<sup>2</sup> which we sang in our Morning Service to-day, give us the essence and the spirit of the life of our race age after age in a few vivid scenes,—could he, as he once touched on the presence and the goodness of the guiding, overruling God of providence in the many-pictured scenes of contemporary life, seeing His Presence with the Caravan toiling over the desert, with the families and tribes in the Captivity, with plague-stricken Cities, with the Toilers of the Sea, with Colonists attacking the pathless steppes, with Classes of men under social depression—could he, I say, as he then looked for the finger of God in man's life spread over space, so also point it out to us in the successive outbursts and waves of human history from age to age, what a Psalm of History would form a pendant to that Psalm of Life! And one day it will be written, centuries hence, when distance has given clearness of grouping, and allowed the scattered rays that trouble us to orb into the perfect star.

To-day, however, circumstances which will be present to the minds of some suggest that in a little measure we should try for ourselves to arrange and group the history of Christian man in some such mode. The very attempt, however imperfectly made, may help us to realise the presence and work of Christ and of His Truth in our own day, and stimulate, perhaps, some among us to the hope

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *Introduction to the Gospels*.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cv.

that we may be permitted to add one single grain to the laborious heap.

I. Mark we then first, that when the last Apostle died our Church History begins. He was the Apostle of Love. He it is who urges ever, round and round from every point of view, that every man ought to regard every man as a brother, and that this is the true fulfilment of the Christian Law. But did he leave things there? Did he leave us with the idea that this individual life of love would be limited by individual life and love? On the contrary, it is out of this simple law of spiritual cohesion that the great fabric of the future rises before him. The last vision which he sees is the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem; the Eternal Commonwealth of endless wisdom, power, and progress, with every check removed, and every suffering assuaged. And it is a double vision. For this the great Human Confederation of the Future fully animated by the Spirit of God in the light of the Lamb of God is called also the Bride of Christ, the Lamb's Wife, that is to say, Human Nature itself shall be inspired, purified, and raised into fitness for companionship with the sublimest manifestation of God which is possible to finite perfection.

With this marvellous hope, then, this marvellous mission, the Church is launched by the hand of the last Apostle: (1) to form mankind into a perfect unity and polity; (2) to elevate human nature until it too is perfect.

And now, then, how shall we characterise the first Age which follows on from this? What is the first scene?

II. It is the Age of Martyrs. This word alone is sufficiently wonderful. The Roman Empire was universal. The Roman principle of Religion was that man might worship whom and what he pleased, an idea, an abstraction, or a magnified human being, full of lusts and passions, or any number of such beings. But for worship not strictly imperial they must obtain a license. The one thing forbidden was to worship with unknown rites, in secret hours, with mutual pledges, One who had risen from the dead; to forsake the world, to testify against its vices, its theatres, its wars, its profligacy, its idolatry. And this forbidden

thing was dearer than life to them who knew it. And hence for three centuries the tribunals were ever and anon taken up with these protesting men, or crowds rose against them, their practices, or their books, and their supposed atheism. If they were let alone they increased, if they were punished they increased more. Martyrdom cleared away hypocrites from among them, and deterred those who might have joined them from interested motives, and so "*Sanguis Martyrum Semen Ecclesiæ*," the blood of Martyrs was the seed of the Church.

What shall we take as typical of that Age? Let us take the Martyrdom of Polycarp, the Disciple of St. John. His last words, as he stood in extreme old age, bound to the stake, with the faggots under his feet, are the keynote of the strain which animated all who followed him. "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of Thy well beloved and ever blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of Thee, the God of angels, powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before Thee; I bless Thee that Thou hast condescended to bring me to this day and hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of Thy Holy Martyrs, and drink of Christ's cup, for the resurrection to eternal life both of soul and body in the incorruptibleness of the Holy Spirit. Into which number grant that I may be received this day, being found in Thy sight as a fair and acceptable sacrifice, such an one as Thou Thyself hast prepared, that so Thou mayest accomplish what Thou, O true and faithful God, hast fore-shown. Wherefore I praise Thee for all Thy mercies, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee through the Eternal High Priest, Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, with whom to Thyself and the Holy Ghost be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

The flames which arched over his head, and waved like a sail inflated with the wind, were kindled again and again, until every land had assured itself that the old Roman fiction of making gods to yourself was a lie indeed, and that the Truth is the one way, and the Truth is the one Life. "The world—that portion of it which was identified

with the real history of the past and of the future—believed in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.”

III. The next age comes on before the first had ended. It is the Age of Organisation. Twice a year did the great Cyprian—trained himself in the grand organisation of Roman law, himself until past middle life a great advocate, and the leading citizen of the second City of the Empire—then convinced of the Truth of the Gospel, as he had long been of the falsehood and folly of Paganism; not long a convert when he was called to be a Bishop—twice a year did he gather the Bishops of Africa to debate. East and west his letters went, everywhere giving strength and counsel, keeping down the rising tyranny of Rome, establishing and yet softening a strong discipline within the Church. With him Organisation grew. But the organisation which attracted most the notice of the Heathen world was that grand organisation of Benevolence, which was as unknown to Greek or Roman as it is essential to the Church of Christ, and which still needs developing and still needs further organising. It was a new thing when the deserted streets of Carthage saw him, with his presbyters, and his deacons, and his influential laymen, rescuing the plague-patients from their deserted homes, or even from heaps in the streets where the ancient religion and affection had cast them, and conveying them, heathen or Christian quite indifferently, to safety and to healing, or, if that could not be, to peaceful death-beds.

IV. We now come to the third Age. Men believed in that Name in various ways. From a hundred philosophical sects, from a hundred half-magical creeds, they had come into the Church of Christ; and they had brought with them their philosophic watchword or their cherished superstition. The danger grew that Christianity should be overlaid with many fancies, that while they believed they should believe imaginatively and not really in the name of “The Son Jesus Christ.”

Then came the great age of Councils. By powerful intellects the infinite subtleties were met. With that keen insight as to consequences, with that logical acumen in



detecting fallacies, with that spiritual apprehension which seems to have been the inheritance of the Greek mind, and almost denied to the Western half of Europe, the great Councils cleared away the superstitions and the inventions, and left the Truth of Christ's Nature standing out in its simplicity, in its awfulness, irrefragable, and unmistakable for ever. They swept away the polytheistic idea that there could be Three Gods; they demonstrated that the Bible turned upon the Godhead of Christ and of the Holy Ghost; and there were defined the outlines of our great Doctrines—doctrines which humiliate while they exalt—enabling us to understand the world, history, ourselves, while they confirm the natural assurance of the human heart that a created nature cannot comprehend the upcreated and infinite.

Thus, then, one great Council established that our Lord was truly God: another that He was perfectly man: a third that the two Natures were inseparable in Him: a fourth that they were for ever unconfused. But of these and all the one great type must be the Council of Nicæa, when error was most magnificently maintained and represented in the person of Arius, and Truth defended by the highest and keenest intellect in the person of the young Athanasius; when 300 Fathers met from every country of the Roman world, some still bearing in face and form the marks of the torture they had borne as Christians in their youth; when the Emperor of the world sate among them; and in the throne of state was laid the roll of the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New.

V. Pass we on now to the times that followed the overthrow of Rome, and you will see the fourth Age.

Realise to yourselves what it would be if London, and Paris, and Rome, and Berlin, and Vienna, and all their sister cities, great and small, were overrun and sacked by barbarians who could neither read nor write, yet who were honest and simple in the main. All Europe covered with a flood of worshippers of every Storm-god and War-god and elemental power.

Conceive how civilisation ceased. And how was it

regenerated? How was the learning and the art and the wisdom and the law of the old Christian empire restored? How was the vast new boyish mass, so to speak, of the broad-natured, honourable, strong sons of the North, the new occupants of Europe from sea to sea, moulded into a new Christendom and a new world?

In the most western Island, our own Island, was the safe and remote nursing-place of the army of Missionaries who mark our next age. It was the Missionary age. For about two centuries and a half the shores of Ireland and of Britain ceased not to pour out the living stream of men, who formed anew with religion and with laws, the Franks, the Germans, the Bavarians, and the Frieslanders, until, greatest of all, Winfred of Devonshire (St. Bonifacius, as he is more commonly called), with extraordinary success converted by his personal efforts and those of his disciples, and in the course of fifteen years established schools and churches and bodies of teachers amongst the wildest nations in what was then almost the wilderness of Central Europe.

We have made great mistakes in ignoring the mental habits, the mode of thought, the intellectual qualifications of such subtle and educated tribes as those of India, trying to plant there not so much the seeds of Christianity, as to transplant the full-grown tree of our own loved Church. Boniface, with truer penetration, we read, "imparted to his wild hearers the germ of all human culture in the seed of divine life, not as an outward possession already complete and prepared for their acceptance, but as something which was to unfold itself with freshness and originality from within, through the inward impulse of a divine life, and in conformity with the individuality of character belonging to this particular race of men." These are the words of the philosophic Neander; but how strange, how striking to find this wisdom anticipated in the early part of the eighth century! Winfred consulted an English friend, the blind and aged Bishop Daniel, Bishop of Winchester, as to the best mode of proceeding, and this was the advice he received: "Begin not at once with refuting the idolatrous notions of the Pagans, but in the way of interrogation, in which you

must show *your own thorough knowledge of their system*, and lead them on to discover for themselves the self-contradiction it involves, and the absurd consequences it leads to; all without insulting or irritating them, but placidly and *with great moderation.*"

Far be it from us to judge hardly the self-denying efforts of our modern Missionaries; but we may surely say that this has not been very fully or usually our method, and we have had little comparative success, while his success was perfect.

It could not be however that in such a land such a life should end gently, and he died a martyr.

Time will not suffer me to proceed to speak of the two great ages which remain, the Monastic age and the Reformation age. Perhaps I may be allowed yet to do so, but I will close with what I have selected as a typical picture of this Missionary age. It is the story of the Oak of Geismar. In Upper Hesse stood this venerable gigantic tree, sacred to Thor, the God of Thunder. "It was regarded with the deepest awe, and was the centre of the national gatherings. In vain had the vanity of Idols been preached upon. The impression of that ancient object counteracted the effect, and even drew back to Paganism new converts. Such a deity seemed to be in its shadow and its many voices and its waving arms. Boniface determined to destroy one sensuous impression by another. He repaired to the spot with a great axe and a band of Christians. The Pagans stood round expecting that the attack upon the sacred monument would be the moment of vengeance. But the tree fell prostrate, was hewn into four pieces, and to make permanent the impression he had produced, its timber was at once built into a chapel dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle, and surmounted with the sign of the Cross."

I have taken this as a last typical picture, because it conveys the lesson which we ought to read in all our history. As the Oak of Geismar was built into the Church, so were the strong virtues of those who surrounded it and saw its fall. So the philosophy and learning of the Greeks found their fulfilment and their reality in defining the

Truth of the Divinity of our Lord and the Articles of our Religion which depend on that. And so for ever will it be—whatever is good. will be wrought into the Church; whatever is bad and really hostile will perish and decay off the face of the earth. But all Truth and all Strength will serve God for ever, gathered up into that organisation which enables us to love one another effectively and to purpose, and with that devotion even unto death, which may yet again, as it has done before, characterise those who believe in the Name of the Only-begotten Son of God.



### BOOK III.



## SERMON I.

### HIGHEST MOTIVES.

1 JOHN iii. 2.

*"It doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."*

ST. JOHN here does what we are perhaps sometimes afraid of doing. He gives us the very highest imaginable motive for doing the very simplest, most necessary things.

We sometimes, in pressing the observance of a particular duty, are tempted to take lower grounds, because we think that the best and highest reasons for the duty will not be understood or felt by those who are urged to it. St. Paul too says sometimes that he takes a lower tone, and speaks "after the manner of men because of the infirmity" of us to whom he speaks. And our Lord Himself tells us that we are right in this, for as there are those, He says, who are so gross and earthly-minded that there is danger even to the cause of truth itself in bringing the purest and most precious truths before them ; so also there must be those who, while they can appreciate already *something* in the way of advanced religious feeling, yet are best assisted in their present condition by having what are called the commonsense plainest motives put before them, in the hope that by and by they will step higher on the road to perfection, and see and care for motives, incentives, principles, which now shine, indeed, like brilliant stars in heaven above them, but are, as it were, hidden from the spot on which they stand by thick intervening banks of cloud.



In this place, St. John is not afraid of his friends and flock failing to appreciate the very highest and purest of all motives.

He is pressing on them the simple, vital duty of *purifying* themselves, making heart and life clean and true.

And what is the motive which they may have before them in doing this? It is that if they hope, as they do, to live eternally and not to die eternally, that eternal life which they hope to come to will be life in the presence of Jesus Christ. Life in the presence of Him who is not only separated from us by so many years of history, but who is separated from us by the separation that there is between the Heaven where *He* is, and the earth where we are—separated from us by the interval that separates holiness from sinfulness, and God from man. All this awful distance is the distance between Christ and ourselves, and yet it is plain that we, when we profess ourselves Christians and hope to live for ever, do mean nothing short of this, that we shall one day and for ever see Jesus Christ our Lord. Then, says St. John, to see Christ means further that you expect to be like Him: Because you do not mean merely that you will see Him with bodily eyes. And any true kind of seeing is impossible unless you are in nature like the person you see. Your friends you know and understand—which is meant by *seeing* in this sense—because you are like them in nature and feelings. It has been said strikingly that man is a god to some of the dumb creatures about him. A favourite dumb companion of an animal knows you and loves you too, sometimes even to the death, but he cannot enter into your anxieties, your hopes, your fears, your sorrow, your thoughts, your sin, your repentance. He knows nothing *really* about you, he cannot see your sort of mind with his sort of mind. He lives in one world, you in a higher. The mysteries which surround the animal creation are very deep in this respect. They do know when you are glad, when you are sorry, but *why* you are so, that is shrouded from them by something impenetrable. Nothing can ever overleap the barrier which parts man from the myriad races of the animal creation. But the far vaster gulf

which separates man from his Maker has been overleaped. God Himself has crossed over it and has taught us to cross it. And the way, as it has been crossed and is crossed, is by God's having taken on Him the likeness of man, and by our being as it were new created in the likeness of God. If we are made like Him, then we shall be able to see Him as He is; and if we have any belief, any hope, of ever seeing Him as He is, it can only be by our being made like Him. Yes! high and great and pure as that thought is, our only life, our only hope lies in it.

And then St. John proceeds (having given us this last, best motive), "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself," and it follows as a matter of course that he must purify himself in the same kind of way as Christ is pure.

Now there is no one surely here who cannot follow this reasoning. The steps are certain—just consider them again. They are these:—

You hope for eternal life. Eternal life consists in seeing Christ. You cannot see Christ without being like Him. You cannot be like Him without being pure. Therefore you must purify yourself. Can anything be more plain? Can anything be more sensible? *But* can anything be more awful?

In another of his writings St. John says more than once, "I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven." Is not *this* like a door opened in heaven? A door which shows us the only everlasting home which our spirits can possibly contemplate for themselves, and a ray of light from it falls down to our very feet, and the narrow threadlike path thither which it lights is—that we must purify ourselves.

And now let me pause upon one difficulty for a moment. Can we purify *ourselves*? How can we men be called upon to purify ourselves? Are you not inviting me to enter upon something which I can never accomplish, which it is an invasion of Christ's work to think of? Must I not beg *Him* to purify me, and leave myself to the work of His Spirit?

In answer, we must say, that as there would be nothing so vain as to try to do Christ's work for ourselves, so there is nothing so useless as to expect Christ to do our work. There

is a purification which God only can effect for us. There is another purification which God cannot and will not do. Sin is forgiven, sinfulness is removed, grace is bestowed by God. None of these things can be obtained by man. But grace must be *used* by man like all other of God's gifts. He must learn to be obedient, he must learn to avoid sin, he must learn to be active in goodness, by the *use* of grace; not by merely standing still as if he were asleep or dead. Whatever may be the source of his activity, he must, so far as he knows, choose, determine, plan, persevere in the way of holiness, as much as in the way of learning, in the way of working, counselling, or pursuing any other energy which God has set before men. And it is plain that unless it were so we should not enjoy the human freedom, the human faculties in that thing which most belongs to humanity—the knowledge and love of God.

We come then to this—that we see our every-day life, with its quickly-passing hours and its serious or trifling occupations, we see it bound up with the prospect of all that is before us for ever. In the present we are making ourselves what we shall be always. St. John tells us a little further on not to be deceived about this, not to fancy that belief and emotions which do not come out in our practice will be counted in our favour. Godless emotions will of course prevent our lives from being true and pure. And it is scarcely possible to suppose that incorrect beliefs, however sincerely we entertain them, will not, according to their importance, show themselves somewhere in our lives. But he warns us against supposing that correct beliefs and vivid emotions of religion *are* religion. His test is a very plain one, and it is more remarkably so, following as it does upon such lofty language. “Let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous.” Am I righteous, are my sins forgiven me, am I reconciled to God through Jesus’ death? Yes, if your belief in Him helps you to be better in your daily life. Not without. “He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous.”

What then must we say to help those who wish to purify themselves even as He is pure, but know not how to

begin? Since the everlasting life begins here, and is so wrapped up with what I am doing and thinking hour by hour, what must I do? In answer, I will ask you to observe this first, that the errors and sins of which you are guilty arise from only two causes—want of *intention* to do right, and want of *attention* to what is going on in your heart.

1. Want of intention to do right is seen in such things as these :—

Sometimes we have united our habits, our leisure, our conversations, with the habits and the half-amusements and the talk of others, who have among them, accepted a bad, low standard. You say, I have become intimate and familiar with this circle of friends; the common principles of their thoughts, life and duty, are lower than my own, and tend to keep me low, and yet I know not how I can part from them, how I can break the bond. There you instinctively hit upon one remedy, for you know that it would be better not only for you, but better for them, if they did not count you as ever ready to applaud or to fall in with what was below the standard of right. But suppose that you cannot do this. Suppose you are right in thinking that you are unable to detach yourself, then you no doubt have a harder task before you, but there can be no doubt what it is. Any one who finds himself anywhere with *principles* higher than those which surround him, even supposing that he is by no means as true and strong as he should be, if, I say, he is only *higher* in his standard than those with whom he is associated, surely it is most plain that he is commissioned by God, as much as any one can be, to let his higher standard be known, not to hide it, but to be a helper to others in an upward course.

I care not if you are ever so unsatisfactory yourself, I care not if your conduct is ever so weak, I care not if your principles and practice are oftentimes ever so much at variance; I say that unsatisfactory, weak, faulty as you may be, you are not placed among those who are faultier still without an express intent on the part of God that

the greater light, the more manly view, which you possess should do good and shine according to its measure. What human teacher, what Master in Israel, can say more than you can? He has a little more light, a little more strength than his neighbours, and it is for them he must use it. Christ's greatest Apostle was once on the point of committing the greatest sin an Apostle could or ever did commit, and all that Christ said to him was that he was in immense danger, that Satan was eager to possess him. "But I have prayed for thee . . . when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Christ's prayer for a very weak one whom He allows to remain among four or five weaker than himself. His strength is little, but that little he is called to use for others. And that very use of what you have is an attempt to purify your life, which may lead you on at last to the very sight of Christ.

2. But again, one great hindrance beyond the want of intention, is the want of *attention* to your own heart. It is the want of attention to that wonderful, never-ceasing, inexhaustible stream of half-formed ideas, fancies, thoughts, notions, which is perpetually rolling over your mind. Have you never thought what an extraordinary thing that Thought-stream is? Have you ever watched it for a few moments as it passes? I do not recommend that you should watch it long; that would be a dreamy waste of time. It is indeed the stuff that dreams are made of. But how true it is that recollections or anticipatory images of some sort, pleasant or disagreeable, good or bad, are perpetually streaming past your mind, coming between you and what you are engaged in, recurring though you drive them away, returning sometimes again and again. And sometimes you fall back on them and let them possess your mind.

Now among these there are certain thoughts and imaginations which are sure to recur more than others, and they are different with different people. To some the prevailing thoughts are of energetic employment, to others of indolence and having nothing to do, to some of making a fortune, to others of enjoying it, to some of being

admired, making a name, and that by foolish, empty things, or by real efforts. And some happy persons there are the background of whose active thoughts is an abiding sense of wish to carry on duties, or of affectionateness to the absent, or of interest in those about them, and higher and better yet, a sense of never being forgotten by God and by Christ. Now there is nothing more adapted to show you what you are, than to ask yourself, What are my most recurrent thoughts? What is the background against which my more active exercise of mind is seen projected? Does it need to be purified? Is it now pure as Christ is pure, or does it tell me that there is still a law of sin in my members warring against the law of God, and bringing me into captivity unto sin and death? If the remembrance of it troubles you, then fall back on this, that if you are overcoming it by degrees, so that you ever succeed in doing righteousness, then God is with you. And be sure that in the battle He will give you every help, He will give you new intention, He will strengthen your resolutions, He will not leave you in the dark, He will enable you to purify yourself and bring your hope of life to a happy end in the presence of Christ.

## SERMON II.

### TRUSTING IN GOD.

HEB. vi. 1.

*"Of Faith towards God."*

WHEN our Blessed Lord was hanging on the Cross, His enemies struck upon a point which they had noticed in His character, which they thought stood out in sharp contrast to His forsaken condition, and which some of us, perhaps, on the other hand, may not have looked for in His character at all. There occurred to them not only His wonderful works and the unearthly power they had seen Him use ; they not only mocked because they had placed Him where He could use it no more—saying, "He saved others ; Himself He cannot save ;" but it appeared to them stranger still—or, rather, in their infatuation, they took it to be a still plainer witness against His life—that "He had trusted in God."

This trait of His character to them had been as marked as His miracles. Even if they thought it insincere, still His whole life had been written over with this motto, *πέποιθεν*—"He hath trusted on God."

On the other hand, perhaps some of us might question how it could be that the Son of God, Who was Himself God, and as God spoke of the whole human race as concerned in and leaning upon His words and life, His dying and rising, His flesh and blood—how it could be that He should have had to "trust in God" at all. Was He not all

the while God in the bosom of the Father living and speaking in a form of earth?

With the "How could it be" we have at present nothing to do. The difficulty of the priests and our own difficulty we do not want now to discuss minutely. We need not now question how it is that God's dearest children suffer at times so much, nor how God became man. But the reason of His "trusting God"—not *seeming* to trust—but really doing that which the priests felt that He had always seemed to do, was here; that *man* He was,—perfect *man*—as much man as He was God, and that to "trust in God" is proper to humanity in its perfection. If He had been God without being man, "Trust" would have been an impossible word to apply to Him. But of God's creatures they only that are less than man in intellect or in character can be without Trust in Him. The more perfect the manhood the more full and warm and strong the Trust.

Thus, then, Christian doctrine lays immense stress on "Trust," or, as the word is more technically translated, on "Faith." Faith or Trust toward God is (like the effective wish to change one's mind for the better, or "Repentance," as we call it) another letter among the elements of the Gospel—one of the essentials required before a man could be enrolled as a Christian among Christians in Baptism. As the author of this same letter to the Hebrews puts it, it is quite obvious that without it a man cannot please God at all. Whoever comes to God must believe or trust in His reality, and in His goodness. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him. He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Before we go on, let us notice the common effect and working upon character of this element of Trust. It may be generally said that Trustfulness and Trustworthiness go together.

Just as we may always hope more of those who are hopeful themselves in difficulties than of those who despond; just as those who are loving are sure to be loved; so also those who are disposed to trust others get trusted



themselves and deserve to be trusted. For we have all of us a great tendency to work into our characters points which we like in others. If we are trustful we love the trustworthiness on which we lean, and we grow more and more trustworthy. And if the process works the other way, it is to the same result. Those who are to be trusted trust others according to the Law which makes us see ourselves in others. However often deceived, such persons begin again their hopeful, trustful habit of leaning on others. They cannot believe that insincerity is common when it is so unlike what they read in themselves, when it is so odious in itself; and a blessed spirit that is, whatever its lot in the world.

Now rise above the world. Suppose the Trust we speak of to be reposed on God, it is still the same. He who Trusts God grows daily (so to speak) more deserving of God's trust—more ready to meet God's eye—more clear in conscience, more free from the least touch of guile. It is very natural then, that when God's people are called in the Bible "the Faithful," we should sometimes be in doubt as to which character is meant. They are in fact both. The word in both its senses is true of them. They are Faithful because they are full of faith and trust *in* God. They are Faithful because they will keep what they have promised *to* Him.

Faithfulness is the first-fruits of Faith.

Now, if you trust in God it will be in two ways.

1. You trust what He tells you.
2. You trust and are sure that He will do what is right—right by every one—right for ever.

1. You trust what He tells you.

What he tells *you* is the Christian Revelation. The Christian *Faith*. To different races and ages He has spoken, as our same author says, "at sundry times and in divers manners." To you He speaks in the most perfect of all Faiths, having "wrought with human hands the Creed of Creeds."

You have had neither time nor powers as yet to study

the evidence for it. But you can understand that while there is one sort of evidence which we call "demonstration" for truths of geometry, and another sort of evidence with another name for truths of science, and quite a different evidence and a different kind of conviction as to the fixed truths of history, there is still a different evidence for truths in religion—and a conviction which none who have known it have ever thought of ascribing to any but a direct influence of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man. "All faith is the gift of God" is an axiom. "No man can call Jesus the Lord but by the Holy Ghost" is the Apostle's statement as to the source of the very first conception of Christianity.

The human means by which men are led to believe are very different in different cases. Some were persuaded by the correspondence of Christ's life with the old prophecies—some by the sight of His works—some by the impression of His human holiness—some by the arguments which the Apostles presented. The "how" will always differ; so long as you drink the pure water of life, it matters not whether it be from cup of metal or crystal, or scooped in the hand.

Your creed you have inherited almost. Generation after generation of Christian parents have probably predisposed your very nature to embrace it. And you have been taught it along with your most elementary notions of sun and moon, and day and night. Your *creed* itself is none the worse for that, and you are infinitely better for it. That you inherit it gives not the slightest ground for questioning it. If you had assured yourself of its certainty by searching the whole range of evidence, that might be a proof of your industry, your ability, your honesty, but it would not make the creed itself more true.

But the important matter for you is that this your creed should be worked into your life: that its truths should not be only written in your brain, but that they should beat from your heart: not that with your eye you should gaze on them, but that with your hands you should mould them into deeds: not that with your ear you should listen to

them, but that with your whole self you should proclaim them.

St. James tells you that the most orthodox of creeds is the creed of devils—that its truths, heard, seen and understood, are dead without deeds. St. Paul tells you that the Creed, your faith in God and Christ, is the very core and centre of spiritual life.

By itself it lies good seed on the iron rock—rich with infinite possibilities, but in your hard heart unfruitful!

But oh, good and honest heart, that has received it with the earnest intent that it should live and bring forth fruit abundantly, you best know its power, its promise, its eternal foreshadowings of ever-multiplying harvests!

One way there is within the reach of every one who has heard the faintest echo of the faith—for even its least truth may be translated into action—even its last sound as it seemed to be dying out in a wilderness has made new music ere now to lonely, longing hearts, and has been repeated again with living breath, and waxed once more to its own fulness and sweetness—one way for him who knows but the least fragment of truth to make that truth his life—and that is Prayer. Whoever has grace to pray that that truth may become a part of his life, that he may give up everything that is inconsistent with his knowledge so far as it goes, that he may not shrink from professing it for any fear of man, he is, if his prayer is sincere, working his faith into his life.

He knows that the question in his trial will be not whether he held the Christian Faith in the sense in which he held any given facts of history, believing them to be true, but whether he clothed that faith with substance and body; and therefore he prays—prays that he may bend the stubborn will, that he may drop the evil habit, do the good thing which he knows of—that, in short, he may *live* his Faith—that Christ's Own Presence may be in his soul, and shine through his acts.

The youngest boy can understand how it may be so with himself; how the least fact he knows may have an influence on his conduct. The boy whose father and mother are far

away knows the difference between ever living and working like a loving son, and being on the other hand, at least in the intervals between their letters, like one who had no father and mother. The boy whose parent is in heaven knows well the difference between living as one who looks back upon and loves the goodness which marked that parent's life on earth, and loves to think of the unknown mysterious peace to which he has been called, and living on the other hand as if his parent—his name and fame and constancy and truth—had been blotted out from all existence.

Or, suppose there were one who had heard nothing whatsoever about God but that God was a Father—the simplest name men have given Him—the child can, if he will, work that truth into his life.

Some have no doubt read the story told by one who laboured hard among the London poor, of how he asked a youth what he knew of religion, and found he had never had any instruction or been within a church. "Did he ever pray?" "Yes, night and morning." "What did he say?" "Our Father." His friend supposed that he said the Lord's Prayer, but shortly found that he knew but the two first words of it—and still he had not failed from childhood to kneel by his poor bedside and humbly say "Our Father." It was all the Faith he had; but he made that faith his own. It was a word of love and reliance, and be sure he was not disappointed of his trust.

He was working his faith into his heart surely. And how does such a dim, sad life, making the utmost of its one struggling sunbeam, testify against those who, having all the Faith before them ever streaming in at eye and ear, flooding their minds, if not their hearts with light, mingling with every custom, every meal, every task, every innocent pleasure, are doing all they can to work the Faith out of their lives?

How shall such a spirit rise up in the judgment and testify against those who through wilfulness, through carelessness, frivolity, fear of others, make their Faith into a fiction.

But even they who do think, even they who are above mere neglectful folly about things eternal, even among them are many habits tending to undermine their faith.

I. There is a state of mind in which, after having had serious misgivings, doubts, or difficulties about a grave subject, and finding themselves unable to solve them, and finding also that they have no immediate relation to practice, but only to the completeness of their theories, persons of unsteady judgment find a kind of strange perverse amusement in looking at the very difficulties they still feel in a half-humorous point of view. It is an incongruity very observable in society. To illustrate it by its opposite, we may remark how our own great dramatist, who of all men saw clearest both the lighter and the tragical side of all life and circumstance, and who lived in an era when the Monk on the one hand and the Puritan on the other afforded endless themes to the authors of the day, has not in all his works one word of ridicule for either one or the other. The really great soul could see nothing ludicrous in what was so unspeakably great, however ill-represented among men. Weaker judgments could not draw the line, but he drew it.

And surely even from him we may do well to learn—and even in religion—from him that we should never speak unmeant words, never talk lightly or jestingly about things to which we have ever given, and shall give again, anxious and (we would fain hope) one day tranquil and happy thoughts.

II. A second habit dangerous to your faith, is a want of tenderness for the faith of others. You may not jest with their faith more than with your own. You may not be impatient with what you think are errors. If you *ought* to combat them—a rare duty—there are weapons of true temper for the work. If you have thought about the question, you will have them ready to your hand. If you have not thought, you surely have no right to speak. But in any case you have no right to sneer if you cannot argue. If you be of that temper, your own faith would surely yield to sarcasm, if it were clever enough and plentiful enough.

III. There is a third danger which affects those who not only believe but feel their religion ; those to whom it comes home with peculiar sweetness and serenity, who love to feel it pervading all their lives, and are never happier than when they feel that all their sentiments are steeped in it, so that it colours all the relations of their lives and even external nature. They have to be on their guard against the way in which a new doctrine, a new thing to believe, a new religious sentiment to be enjoyed, will attract them. It pleases their taste, or it seems to fill a void, or to soothe a craving, or harmoniously to piece on with the rest of their faith. They do not care sufficiently therefore for the *reason* of it, especially if the imagination is stronger in them than reason.

Such are very often very holy noble persons in life and feeling. But the danger is very great with them of actually losing their faith at last, or of weakening it—even sometimes late in life. A faith so pieced, so bordered, so fringed as it were, is seldom lastingly satisfactory to its possessor. He knows, when he reflects, that much of it came to him unconsidered ; he gets to doubt whether the earlier part would bear consideration. He has never cultivated his habits of reflection ; he is unable to argue it out from the beginning ; and a general vague doubt overspreads the whole.

IV. Lastly, there is a worse danger yet affecting faith—worse than any, as it seems to me—and that is, the believing about God things unworthy of justice, things uncompassionate, things arbitrary. I am afraid to say how largely it seems to me such things do enter into the everyday religion of good Christians. Some seem to believe that He cares not for goodness in itself—that a good heathen (for instance) is no nearer to Him than a wicked one—that goodness is hollow if it does not rest on a belief exactly like their own.

Others seem to think that He can tolerate and dwell with evil : that He can abide ungenerous hearts, and selfish lives, and luxurious habits, in those who hold Christian Doctrine in a pure form. Others that He can

rejoice, or at least consent to, the inevitable ruin, the lasting perdition of the chief part of mankind, when they have had no chance of being better than they were or knowing better than they did.

The opposite kind of people think that when He has promised to us great blessings of forgiveness and salvation on certain conditions, He will give them us even if we perform not those conditions. They think He means one thing and says another. It is the secret hope, the only hope of many. •

Many other such things there are which people persuade themselves to believe. As good old Bishop Jeremy Taylor said, "They believe about God things for which they would hate a man."

Let us all our lives beware of taking up beliefs which disparage God's justice or mercy or truth. Can such beliefs be called "Faith in God" at all? Or if our Faith is undeniable, then is it *God* in whom we believe? or if it *is*, nevertheless, then if we so esteem of Him as we would never consent to esteem of a father or friend—what can we expect for ourselves but the old Hebrew Prophet's answer, "As I live, saith the Lord, unto the men that say such things I will not be inquired of by you"?

## SERMON III.

### GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

*"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

LAST Sunday the Epistle spoke of the crucifixion of the flesh as a certain mark of belonging to Jesus Christ—"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh,"—and I tried to show what was meant by this : how we must, if we are to be Christ's in any true sense, triumph over many an evil inclination in our nature day by day, resisting and contending within ourselves; and how, in order to this, it is most necessary that we examine our own consciences in the sight of God, to find out what is the evil of our character, and to be watchful and prayerful in overcoming it.

Now suppose this once done, or partly done, suppose we could feel that we had really conquered some bad inclination, or at least overpowered it so far that it had not for a long time troubled us in any serious way. Suppose, for instance, that a naturally bad temper had been so far mastered that we had suffered no outbreak of petulance, or self-will or spite, for a time long enough to assure us that we really had, as it were, bound our enemy, and had now less to fear than once; a pleasurable feeling of strength, a courage for the future would rise within us. And so with any other conquered evil, each as it departed would leave in its room a sense of victory and of happiness.



And yet there would at this very moment arise a new danger. All experience tells us that there is scarcely any danger greater than the pride—the Spiritual Pride, as it is called—which besets men at a certain point of their progress upward. The first graver temptations overcome, there then comes on the temptation to believe in our own holiness as something attained by ourselves, and not the gift of God, to believe in our own work within our own souls, instead of seeing everywhere the working of God's right hand.

This was one danger, to which those to whom St. Paul wrote in Galatia, who like ourselves were still young in the faith and knowledge of God, were exposed.

There was a second danger. The more advanced of them who had from their youth been taught in the knowledge of God from the old Law had superadded to this a certain acquaintance with Christianity from the lips of St. Paul and others. These not unnaturally looked on themselves, and were looked upon as more advanced believers than those who had just been reclaimed only out of the darkness of a most superstitious heathenism, such as appears to have reigned supreme in Galatia.

But those persons, though longer taught of God, were liable to be very dangerous to Christianity. St. Paul all his life long was doing battle with these Judaisers, as they have since been called. They, for two reasons, wanted to mingle a great deal of Jewish observance with the Christian religion. First they argued, "Why should you set yourselves in opposition to the old people of God? Christianity can, after all, be only a development of that ancient venerable Law, adapting it to be communicated to all nations. The law shall now, through Christ's teaching, go forth from Jesus, and all nations shall flow into Mount Zion. And the ancient people of God will receive them with open arms, and all God's blessings shall be spread abroad. Take then upon you these observances which are so dear to the heart of God's chosen people, and the seal of the covenant which He has made. And there will be no opposition between them and you, between the Law and the Gospel. And neither we nor you shall suffer any persecution on any

side. As a new religion we should be in danger. As desiring to be one with Israel we shall be gladly received by Israel on the one hand ; on the other hand, the heathen rulers have already admitted and sanctioned their rites and worship, and they live in peace in the midst of them."

These feelings and hopes are swept away by St. Paul : he shortly affirms that such worldly hopes and prospects are not to the point : that they have nothing to do with the question—that the whole line of argument is false and baseless.

In a few short words he says : "They constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ." Plainly an untenable ground altogether ; and he goes on—"They desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh." A great triumph it would have been for them to be able to look round on all sides and say, "These are our followers. We have found the way to bring in the Gentiles to the ancient fold. We have done a double benefit. We have made the heathen know God, and we have lengthened the cords and strengthened the stakes of the Tabernacle."

And thus all unawares, and as it were quite suddenly,—there was the pride of partial self-conquest, there was the pride of proselytism, there was the safe and easy method of avoiding trouble in this life on account of religion—and all this had come in like a flood.

With what feelings must the Apostle have gazed on the spiritual scene before him ! He had indeed a right to speak of self-conquest who had counted all things as loss for Christ : who had crucified the world unto himself and himself unto the world. He had a right to be proud of his converts who was the father of all the European Churches. And what would he think of the shrinking from persecution who, as he himself said, "bore in his body the very marks of the Lord Jesus"—to whom stripes and prisons and very death were so familiar ?

If there was room for pride, for glorying, for boasting, who should be proud but St. Paul ? "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Save in the thought that He died for me it is impossible that I should be proud: nay, he says the Cross of *our* Lord—the Lord of all—not only *my* Lord. He is proud of that; proud to mingle in the vast multitudes of those who call Him *our* Lord. To be one of *them*, one of those for whom Christ suffered, is matter for pride indeed. But there is room for no other pride in this world.

Let us now for a few moments see why we, as Christians, should follow St. Paul's example, and glory or boast in Christ's Cross.

For us to-day It has three grand particulars: grand ~~they~~ are as regards us and the world and human knowledge—1, as It stamps human life; 2, as It sets its mark on sin; 3, as It evinces Love of God. We will take the first two to-day. But doubtless the Cross has infinite relations to other creatures, other worlds, and other wisdom than ours. St. Paul says, in the Epistle to the Colossians, that by "the Blood of his Cross God reconciled all things unto Himself; whether things in earth or things in heaven." But into these regions we cannot enter; scarcely even in a shadow can we divine those infinite relations: but as regards this earth, as regards ourselves and our nature, we will take two points on which the Cross sheds no doubtful light.

1. Then it assigns their true value to the things of this life. All things for which men strive, all for which they outbid each other, and destroy each other, riches and power and enjoyment and praise,—what do they look like to one who has fixed his gaze and his thoughts for a time upon Christ's Cross, and even in the least degree taken in its meaning?

Imagine to yourselves a scene of this world; see men labouring night and day to amass wealth, see the sacrifices of the poor wretches who toil that others may be rich, toil in ignorance of all things of this world, much more in ignorance of God. Then look on human wars: and then look on human pleasures, and the blindness and the madness with which honour and self-respect are sacrificed to short-lived mirth,—and then see others labouring zealously

in the cause of duty, or in the cause of benevolence, seeking to alleviate suffering, or to dispel ignorance, and spread the thought of God and heaven upon that scene; and while all this is going on suppose the Cross silently reared in the midst of them, and the dying brow of Christ seen, and a voice from heaven heard saying, "This is the Lord of all; this is the Creator both of you and of the things for which you strive. He came and lived among you—and this is the end of His life as a man." Surely such words and such a sight reduce at once to their true level, and put their true value on all the things with which we are concerned. Yes, the Cross puts a stamp on all thoughts, all aims, all habits, all employments, all professions of men, all our ways from the cradle to the grave.

And, 2, if it sheds a clear light on a dark scene of turmoil, and makes it certain that most of the things that men aim after are unworthy of them; that it is beneath us to forget things eternal and adhere to things temporal; that it is mere blindness not to see beyond our little day of fleshly life. There is one thing on the scene of human life which is revealed in awful shape by the appearance of Christ's Cross among us.

What is that thing which we call *sin*? What is it that we should seek it and find it and give it a home in our hearts, and a steady influence upon our actions, when it is that, and that only, which caused the Death upon the Cross?

Surely a hideous, hateful thing it is in the world—and what it is upon a large scale in the world, that it is upon the small scale in my heart. That which has wrought such destruction, that which has slain my Lord, does not change its nature when it steals into my bosom and dwells with me, entering into my feelings and my wishes and my desires.

Oh! beloved, this is one reason why at the beginning of my sermon this day I urged you so to begin a serious practice of self-examination.

You can come into church with others, and it is impossible but that you should feel as others do that in general your nature is sinful; if any one should refuse in his own heart to say, "We have sinned and done amiss; we are sinful,

and need forgiveness ; we have gone astray from God, and are not at one with the Holy One ;" if any one should refuse to say or think so, he would not be a Christian at all—he would not even deserve the name of a thinking man—and therefore this may be said over and over again as a general truth, without producing any marked change in life and conduct.

But it is a different thing when you come before God alone, after self-examination. Then you cannot escape or evade the knowledge and sense that *you*, owing to *sin*, are in a special relation to God. And what a terrible thing that we should evade in any way such knowledge ! What a necessary thing that we should be aware, so far as is possible, of how we really stand toward Him with Whom alone in Life and Death we have to do !

" *I have done this or that particular sin. That thing was my doing. In that wickedness I took part. That falsehood, that offensive word, that injurious saying which sounded that day in the ears of God was and is mine.*"

When we thus speak truth to ourselves and God, then we begin to know what it is to have the Cross to look to.

Yes ; and we think of Christ's Death for sin, and then go back once more into our own hearts ; and again we cannot be content with generally allowing " All men have sinned, and I am a great sinner too ;" but once more there is the true voice of the heart which has searched into itself, and has looked on its past doings, or the history of one week or day, and says, " Whatever others may have done or said, this particular load of sins is mine, and no man's else—it belongs to me ; I did it, I alone in all the world, and in all time and in all eternity, have done that thing. Others may have done the like ; that is not to the point. This act is mine."

So to feel and think and speak the truth to ourselves is the first step ; and when we have made it, by self-examination, with what a different heart, with what a different meaning, do we come into this house and say, " We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done : we have done those

things which we ought not to have done. But thou, oh Lord, have mercy upon us. Spare Thou them which confess their faults: restore Thou them that are penitent." And then, indeed, there is hope that glorying in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may say, and say with good success, "according to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord. Grant, oh most merciful Father, for His sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of Thy Holy Name."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I gratefully believe these two pages to be a reminiscence of the extempore eloquence of an English Canon and noble orator heard at Bellagio.

## SERMON IV.

### THE APOSTLES' ALPHABET.

HEB. vi. 1, 2, 3.

*“ Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”*

THERE are in the writings of the New Testament so few hints as to what was the basis of Christian instruction that this passage has always been considered very rightly as of great historical importance. We have here summed up in a few words the heads of the first teachings in the doctrine of Christ which were given in the Church in the time of the Apostles themselves.

It is introduced in this manner : the Apostle is anxious in this epistle to comfort and strengthen the Hebrew Christians who under many troubles and strong persecution had fallen into a dejected state of mind and were some of them half ready to renounce Christianity altogether. He sets before them the glory and dignity of being Christ's own people—the danger of parting from such a Saviour—the *actual* elevation of soul and mind to which earthly trouble may be made *actually* to minister. He shows them also that their religion is itself a philosophical, an expansive, a progressive thing,—that new truths, new mysteries open out before the thoughtful Christian, and lead him ever upward, ever onward, exercising his reason, and enriching his intellect, as well as fastening his heart upon a

friendship which is above all other friendships, and making him certain of a sympathy, in comparison of which all others are pale and cold.

In passing, he gently reproves them for having suffered troubles of this world so to dispirit them that they had never given their minds to these great things—but feeling as if they were not for them, had taken a sad, dull, unhappy, dark view of life, content if they could but hold fast that they had. Instead of determining to know, to think, and to enjoy, they had in mere despondency rested in a narrow circle of ideas, and the monotony had increased the despondency.

“Let us go on to perfection,” he says. . . . “This we will do, if God permit.”

But (to go no further to-day) how valuable to us it is to know what that first circle of ideas was which broke with new light upon the man who stepped out of heathenism, or out of Judaism, into the Church of Christ. How more than ever valuable at a time when searching agencies are on foot on all sides. It is characteristic of our time that men wish in everything to go back to the beginning and investigate the rise of all we see. In science, in history, in politics, there is a general asking for the first traces of existence, the causes of institutions, the first principles. If in religion any erroneous principles are at work in our day, we shall best acquit ourselves in doing our duty in that most important of all fields, if we turn back to the beginning and learn all we can of that.

Could we take all that Christians all over the world believe and practise, and map it out for ourselves, we should divide the doctrines and usages before us into two classes. Those which were either identical with what had existed from the beginning, or were developed out of it by true historical laws; and those on the other hand which we should pronounce to be not historically true as deductions: to have been brought in from elsewhere—not developments, but alterations.

To do this work thoroughly great knowledge and great powers of mind would be of course required. When it



was once done, neither the enemies nor the disciples of our holy religion would be concerned with the second class at all. But because it is as yet only partially done there is as yet confusion on both sides.

In the text we have a passage from a work so ancient that, though its author is not certainly known, the very first Christian writer after the Apostles may be said to have both its thoughts and language completely transferred into him—and in this passage we have a short statement of what the author calls the “foundation” of the doctrine of Christ. And I think it will be well if we try to understand it a little more thoroughly than we do, perhaps; for though (as the Apostle reminds the Hebrews) a foundation is by itself of no use for human purposes, but only has relation to what we are to build upon it, yet no valuable lasting building is that whose foundations are unsound.

What have we then? Let us read the passage again:—“Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” Here then is a clear statement of Repentance and of Faith as leading up to Baptism, of Baptism itself, and of its not standing alone as an outward act, but of there being a doctrine of Baptism, as well as one of Laying on of Hands or Confirmation. Then of the Resurrection of the Dead, and of Eternal Judgment.

These are what he calls in the previous chapter, the “first principle” or more literally the “alphabet” of the oracles of God. This is the alphabet, the marks, signs, characters in which those oracles are written. We cannot even read the oracles unless we know the alphabet.

And indeed at once—before we proceed any further to examine them one by one (as I shall hope to do in the next few Sundays)—we see that this is historically the key to the earliest Apostolic teaching. In the Book of the Acts of the Apostles we have the summaries of no less than eight sermons (if we may so call them) or addresses, or

speeches upon important occasions,—and very various they are in language, in style, and in argument. But examine them with care and what do we find brought out as the principal salient points, which the speakers wished to develop as being the most important things they had to tell and impress upon those who heard them for the first time? Exactly the same points—Repentance, Faith, Baptism, Resurrection, Judgment, and in the two instances in which Christians are addressed and not Jews or Heathens, *Confirmation*. All that need now be noticed is simply this fact, that these are the first topics of the Christian preacher in each instance.

In Acts ii. we have St. Peter's first sermon. Its heads are these:—the proof of Christ's Resurrection—the Call to Repentance, and then to Baptism for the Remission of Sins and the Reception of the Holy Spirit.

In chap x., St. Peter's address to Cornelius, the conclusions to which he brings his reasonings are, the Resurrection of Christ—the Remission of Sins—the Gift of the Holy Ghost—Baptism.

In chap. xii. St. Paul presses two points on the Pisidians of Antioch; the Resurrection of Christ—the preaching of the Remission of Sins.

In chap. xvii. his sermon on the Areopagus is broken off just where he reaches the Resurrection of Christ.

In chap. xxiv. he addresses Felix upon Justice, Temperance, Future Judgment.

In chap. xxvi. he addresses Agrippa on the Resurrection, on Remission of Sins, on Faith, and on Repentance.

Again in chap. viii. we have SS. Philip, Peter, and John, preaching in Samaria; their subject also is Faith—Baptism—and Imposition of Hands for the imparting of the Holy Ghost.

And lastly, in chap. xix. St. Paul at Ephesus preaches Faith—Baptism—Laying on of Hands, and the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

I know not how we can bring before our minds more clearly than in this manner the reality of the conviction that for all persons, for all times and circumstances, the

faith had one beginning and one basis—that there were great and eternal truths to be learnt and held, that the external bonds of unity, such as Baptism and the Laying on of Hands, possessed for the individual an importance quite beyond that of signs mutually agreed on, that from the first they were held to be channels and media of spiritual blessing, that Repentance and Faith were absolutely necessary before these blessings could be obtained, that where these existed they were crowned in Baptism by the grace of God given, that the Resurrection of Christ was a fact which had to be added to men's former experience and taken account of, that when thus taken account of it implied the future Resurrection of ourselves from the dead, and an Eternal Judgment.

Let us take now to-day that which stands in the forefront of this and of all the Apostle's sermons, and of all thought about a new life—Repentance. There can be no commencement without that. There is no doubt that some thoughts of it are among the most familiar, not only to those who are really seeking righteousness and God, but to those also who live very carelessly in general. The thought of the shamefulness of sin, of the disgrace which it brings on them in their own eyes—even if it is hidden from others—will often make men feel sorry for their sin though for a time they go on sinning. So with the thought of God's anger against sin, the fear of an evil day to come, make them often in the midst of sin wish to shake it off. Nor ought we to despise even such weak feelings as these. If a man neglects them continually though he may continue to feel them, he may come to be a hypocrite and worse—yet for all that they are the stirring of the Spirit of God touching him and trying to awake him, though He has not as yet taken up His abode in him.

But—unhappy it is to say so, but it is true—there are many who, for years perhaps or for ever, never pass this point; and in them Repentance cannot be really said to exist. You may know them very well and think that they are just on the point of making a change and shaking off the power of sin. You know that the Person and the work

of Christ, and the beauty and the power of His words, are often before them and are not without attractiveness for them, they have often sad fears about death and hopes of changing before it comes—but they stand trembling, and do not break the chain which holds them. You are perhaps separated from them for a time. Your experience will have shown you some who had once seemed to be in just the same case, now really living a new life, and others again fallen very low in sin and in shame. But there is the person we are speaking of still just what he ~~was~~, still wishing to be a Christian in more than name, and not becoming so, still longing to repent and not repenting, still looking forward to the end of life with the same gloom in his serious hours and serious conversation; and this is the last you see of him.

Now surely this is a very grievous and very pitiable state, one which we cannot bear quietly to think of without an earnest prayer to God Almighty that it may never be the condition of ourselves or of any one dear to us; or, if it were possible, of any human soul—for we were not created for this.

Let us think then what is wanting to raise one out of this state into true Repentance. 1. There must be in us (and we *can* by God's grace produce it in ourselves), a real dislike and hatred of the sin (whatever it may be) which makes us feel unworthy of Christ, and afraid of the punishments of this and of the next life. The sin somehow at first attracted us, or fastened some spell upon us, and it has even now a kind of power to draw us to it. But the examples of many, very many in the Bible, show us how completely and thoroughly the step may be taken, which makes us hate the sin with a perfect hatred. God would not call us to what is impossible, and He does call us to this. He says, "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit"; and so, one says, "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight;" and another, "Every night wash I my bed and water my couch with my tears;" and another, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

These and many other such-like sayings flow plainly from a real hatred of and detestation of sins which the speakers had done.

This is the first thing necessary.

Secondly, there is wanted for true repentance a confidence in God's mercy. For people who are happy and at ease in their minds, or who are careless about sin, it is easy enough to talk lightly of God's mercy, and to feel sure that He will forgive everything because He is so merciful. But pain, and the anguish of frightful forms of disease, and insanity, and the craving torment of some kinds of sin, and the education in self-avenging crime which is as real a thing for some among mankind as education in goodness is for others—these are facts not easy to reconcile with a general theory of benevolence, and show us that there is a place in the economy of the universe for sorrow and for suffering. And, then, let a man once feel in reality the true character of sin, he will find it require an effort to realise God's mercifulness; but when he does realise it, it will be in a much higher way than before. He will see God unable to unite with Himself the horribleness of sin, and sinful wills, but making efforts divine, eternal, infinite, to draw the sinner away from sin, that He may redeem him, and cleanse and glorify him. He will see the Father surrender His only Son to be a man and die to win back sinful souls—and then the mercy of God will begin to mean something to him, something upon which he can trust.

Then thirdly, there must be the steady resolve to lead a new life: and this cannot be without *confession* to the inmost depth, either to God or man. If the offences have been against man; if you have been disobedient to a parent's will, if you have been untrue to any one or injured any one in act or in word, to repair it is absolutely necessary. It is formidable beforehand to think of it; but it is a sacrifice which, once made, will be, as every one who has tried will tell you, easy in the actual performance, most happy to look back upon, and the greatest possible safeguard against future misdoing. "Confess your sins one to another, brethren," says St. James, and in so saying he recommends

to us not only an act of justice, but the best rule of self-amendment.

Other sins there are which are against God only and our own souls, especially sins of thought, which are among the most dangerous of sins, because they are not checked by public opinion; and these must be confessed with equal earnestness to God, and with perfect sincerity. "O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults" you must pray; from those which are hidden from all eyes but Thine and mine; yea, even from those which my own careless heart has forgotten utterly.

And even in dealing with sins against God, it is of no little avail to make up your mind to confess these also to a good wise friend. The very uttering them is a profound relief; the communication of his experience and the opinion which he can give you from the outside, taking a fair and earnest view, all this is an inestimable gain. Such friends are not to be met every day, but every one may have one or two such friends if he knows how to look for them, and such a friend is drawn to us in the time of our repentance by a bond which nothing will break.

No one therefore, beloved, need remain in the state of a helpless wisher to improve and lead a new life. Whoever is in that state let him recognise that the voice of God is therein calling him to true repentance.

Such repentance was required of the early Christians before they could be baptised. Such repentance you promised by your sureties before your own baptism. And whatever the blessings of Baptism may be, yours they are not, and cannot be, unless you perform the conditions on which it was by anticipation conferred on you. And again, such is the repentance which when men have sinned after Baptism must be resorted to again and again in order to the Remission of their sins through Christ.

Lastly, in these three things, as I have shown you, it consists—1. Hatred of the Sin. 2. Trust in God's Mercy. 3. Confession such as the case requires, with reparation.

## SERMON V.

### OF THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS.

HEBREWS vi. 2.

*"Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."*

A LITTLE consideration will show that the Doctrine or teaching of Baptisms means the doctrine or teaching *about* baptisms, and that baptism was therefore not merely a decent, special ceremony, but that some teaching was wanted to understand it.

There is a question as to why Baptisms, more than one, are mentioned; and some have thought it refers to instruction as to the great difference between Jewish washings and Christian. But it would seem unnatural to express so much by, and force so much meaning into, one word, and it seems sufficient to understand it of the constant spectacle of the act repeated for each new member who joined the Church.

Let us then ask ourselves whether we know what the Doctrine of Baptisms was which was reckoned to be one of the Elements of the Gospel.

There are, as of course you know, great controversies even at the present day, about the Doctrine of Baptism—controversies which careless lookers-on cannot understand, and think wrong. They are unavoidable, and far from wrong if they spring from a love of truth. The spirit in which they are conducted may be right or wrong: the spirit of men striving for supremacy, or the spirit of men who would give up all for Christ's peace and truth. The greater the subject

the more certain is controversy, and the more need of chastened tempers and gentle spirits, as well as of subtle reasonings. The evil spirit is not born of the controversy, still less of its holy subject—he is from without, and would fain pollute all with malice.

Still these controversies are the offspring of the thoughts of the ages in which they are born. They arise in varying forms, as new philosophers arise and contemplate truths from ever new points of view. We are often quite unable to grasp the very meaning of old controversies when the central idea has somehow slipped out of our range. We may be more sure still that the difficulties, and questionings, and objections, and solutions of our own time were not within the field of vision of the first age. Often the words remain when new meanings have been attached to them, and are become like our Father's Ensigns in strangers' hands; often the old principles are for a time lost sight of because they are not recognised, armed with some new defences.

Thus then, it is vain to suppose that the latest question of theology has its answer in so many words in some passage of the Bible. The principles on which the answer is to be based lie partly in the Bible, partly in the world of facts around us, and partly in our own reason. If we are bad reasoners, or bad observers, we shall certainly not be good interpreters. However momentous seems the question of the day to us, we cannot expect to find a straightforward answer to it in the Bible, unless it exactly coincides with what the question was which the Apostle had to answer. And to suppose, as some almost seem to do, that by some kind of mystical process all possible answers to all possible questions are hustled together into texts which related properly to other subjects, is to make it a mere oracle for the superstitious, not a guide of life for the wise. And thus, like other oracles, it becomes a tool for the crafty.

We shall not therefore expect that any of the distinctions of later days appeared in a distinct form in the Doctrine of Baptisms. We have each of us a right, and probably each of us a duty, as to forming opinions upon the advance and



development of doctrines in the Church, but we cannot do worse for our own minds (and in the end our hearts) than, having formed our opinions, to turn and gaze on texts of Scripture till we fancy we see those opinions actually expressed there in plain terms. Morally, the process is unjustifiable ; intellectually, it can be compared to nothing better than the childish pleasure with which in solemn colossal cloud-shapes we trace the likeness of our own homes and furniture and the features of our friends.

Nothing very subtle or minute is at all likely to have formed the grand elementary Doctrine of Baptism. Nothing very precise as to the manner of God's working. How endless are the questions that arise, how infinite to our fancy the possibilities as to the union of God with man ; of the departure of the soul of Christ : its isolation, its work, its redemption of a body—the same, yet not the same, as before ! Yet into none of these questions is there any entry in Scripture. " He was born of the Virgin Mary." " He rose from the dead." That is all. They lie before us like any of the riddles of nature—impossible, yet accomplished.

And so of Baptism. The language of Scripture is very strong indeed as to the benefits it confers, and the obligations it enforces ; but it does not decide (that I see) as to the *how*. I hold opinions, very decided perhaps, as to the *manner* in which these benefits come ; but if I maintain that it is plainly written down in Scripture and is essential to any one else, one answer to that is by me unanswerable. Sensible men, thinking men, sagacious men, pure-minded men, holy men, have read the Word differently. From this I can but conclude that Scripture does not decide on the *manner*. A vast field besides, and a world of close reasoning is required to answer this question, and not required for holy baptism or for salvation.

Whether then, I believe that at the very hour of that holy event—named for me in Scripture along with the greatest natural events—treated as a thing of the same order as birth and death, there is a specific operation of the Holy Ghost upon my nature—or whether I esteem that hours and days have no reference to the Divine ; that time has nothing to

do with anything God does ; that a soul-epoch is an eternal event, belonging to an order of things not measured by time, eternal in the sight of God—and lose myself in imagining how the acts of His creatures can nevertheless be acts of God ; or whether I think baptism to be a sign, a seal, a symbol upon earth *representing* a heavenly purifying of my sins away ; or whether I look on it as just the solemn expression of my introduction into the Church, rightly accompanied with good resolutions, with earnest prayers, with religious witness ; whether, in short, I take it, 1, that God then performs some great thing ; or, 2, that He expresses to us what He has performed ; or, 3, that He pledges Himself to do some great thing ; or, 4, that His living servants then admit you into their visible number—whichever of these opinions I hold, I do not for one moment doubt as to the greatness, as to the reality, as to the divineness in any case of the Sacrament. In any case, there is for me a doctrine of baptisms, which I am obliged to place on a great height, and to class with repentance, and faith, and birth, and death, and whatever is holiest and greatest for man.

Let us read over a few passages of Scripture in which it is mentioned, and let us remember that most of them come from St. Paul, the great destroyer of merely outside ceremonies, and the least metaphorical of writers. Mark the place he gives it when he mentions it in this connection : “ One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all ; ” again, “ He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; ” again, “ He cleanseth the Church by the washing of water through the Word ; ” again, “ We are buried with Christ in baptism, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life ; ” again, “ Some of you were great sinners, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified ; ” and again, “ As many of you as are baptised have put on Christ.”

And then again, St. Peter says, “ Baptism doth now save us ; ” and our Lord Himself says, not only “ *Except* a man be born of water and of the Spirit he shall *not* enter into

the kingdom of God," but in another place He says, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."

Now, just consider the range and number of the effects which are here closely linked with baptism, and we can well understand how it was the first Apostle's first advice to his converts, and from that time on the first thing which every Christian did, to "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, and wash away your sins."

The cleansing of the Church; our salvation; our renewal by the Holy Ghost; buried with Christ; recall from gross sin; being robed in Christ; being purified from all sins; these are some of the points which we just now summed up when in the Nicene Creed we sang aloud, "I believe in one baptism for the remission of sins."

This being so, though we can understand how, as I said just now, some holy and wise men hold it to be a lively symbol of God's acts in heaven, it does not seem possible to believe—and I suppose few have ever practically believed—that it was only a metaphorical act on the part of men. It seems sufficient to set aside that idea if we only apply it to one or two of these passages. For instance, can we conceive our Lord, when He says, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," to mean "He that believes and performs a metaphorical act representing this shall be saved," or St. Paul to have said, "One Lord, one faith, one figurative representation, one God and Father of all," or "He cleansed the Church by a metaphorical washing with water"? We can scarcely think that is the full meaning of the passages.

But, beloved, if it is no metaphor, if whatever it is—means or symbol, pledge or performance—it has such unspeakable divine effects one way or other bound up with it, then pause a moment. Has this divinity been indeed stirred for you; put in motion for you; drawn out towards you; *you*, with your own Christian name then given you; has God yearned not towards all men, all humanity, but towards you, as you know yourself, as you always remember yourself:—and what are you now?

It was so provided for you that by anticipation all the

blessings described in such awful, such dear terms, were realised for you. It could then be said of you that you were "cleansed by water through the Word." Not one sin, nor one consequence of sin, was to lie against you. If you repented and believed, Christ was your Robe. Your evil nature with which you were born was dead; you were alive with Christ—alive, and not liable to death eternal—you were saved. These are the very words of God.

And now it may be you cannot truthfully say that anything in your life here could show either men or angels that you love God or are God's. You have parted perhaps for ever on earth with a father, a mother, a sister, a brother, either in former years or even lately, about whom you are quite sure that they live in God for ever, and you have nothing in your heart or lips which assures you that you will meet them again. You do bad things, your friends do bad things, they make you worse, and you make them worse than they would be without you. Once your soul, forgiven and blessed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was filled with unconscious grace, fair in the sight of God, ready for eternal holiness and gladness; and now you never mention the name of God, except in a formal way in church. Perhaps your foolish and horrible oath is the only sign you ever give to some of your friends that you know of a hereafter—a heaven—or a place of suffering, or an evil spirit.

I take an extreme case, do I? Yes, but I do not exaggerate it—it is a real one; and whoever says, "It is not my case; I may be careless and thoughtless, but I am not so wicked as that," well, let *him* be his own judge. Let him only look on *what was* given him (according to what we have read from Scripture) in baptism. He shall say himself whether he has used it properly, or whether he has wasted it; whether he has given every golden grain of it a chance to grow, or whether he has let it lie on the rock, in the baking sun, in the wasteful wind. Are you honestly conscious that you have recognised and are recognising the value of what God so freely gave or offered? Are you proudly conscious of having expressed to Him the thanks

of a rescued soul, and asked Him still to keep you in that original sacredness, and enable you to live a sacred life corresponding to that sacred birth—to empty you of sins, to charge your soul with holiness? Can you really say that you have in any way shown to your Saviour in return for an eternal gift, anything like the affectionate gratitude which your face, your manner, your whole conduct, would express to a friend for some present which would be here to-day and gone to-morrow?

And yet, my son, my *careless* son, to *you* I speak. That was a lovely spring-time of your life; where is its rich promise? It was good seed which He sowed in the field of your heart; where is the corn? He embarked you in a noble vessel; where is the freight of merchandise you have brought home in it?

But you will say, Surely it was not possible for me really to keep that high estate, in which I was unconscious of myself? I was so holy; could I, as I grew up, walk through the world and keep that spotless robe of Christ unsullied?

What you say is true, and it would be mere conventional phraseology if I were to tell you you might have kept that baptismal perfection if you only had chosen to do so, and that you must resolve that henceforth you will not offend against it any more.

It would be very good if it were possible, considering what you are; but it is not possible. Let us look at this Sacrament from two points of view, which will perhaps help us in our practical endeavour to make the best use of God's grace given or promised us on conditions therein, and they shall be two primitive aspects which were undoubtedly held from the very first.

1. "Be baptised, and wash away your sins." It is the Sacrament of forgiveness.

2. "Buried with Him in baptism that we should walk in newness of life." It is the Sacrament of responsibility.

1. The Sacrament of forgiveness; but forgiveness how complete; rather say, the Sacrament of remission. It is not said merely the guilt or the punishment is remitted,

but that from which guilt and punishment spring—the very sins themselves. This is what is given to you, or if you please, assured to you in baptism; this for your first instalment of the gifts of Christ. The very sin itself—not mown down on the surface like a noisome plant, but extirpated, rooted out, clean gone. You are no more guilty of sin, birth-sin, unless you draw it back to you. No punishment due to you for it in this world, no separation from God, as its consequence, hereafter, if you believe the promise. There is no condemnation for those who have been really buried with Christ and put on the new man.

But are there not natural desires left which tend to evil? Yes, but the desire itself is not sinful. The natural movement towards that which attracts your nature is as much implanted in you, as much a part of you, as that the pupil of your eye should contract in excess of light, or the nerves creep at pain. But you have reason given you to advise, grace given to enlighten from a moral point of view, a will able to control your actions. You have to judge whether what is desired is lawful or sinful, and to govern both act and thought accordingly. If your will surrenders itself to the desire when you know it is not allowable, then there is sin, wilful sin, but the desire is not sinful unless there is this surrender of the will, or a negligence which leaves the will at its mercy.

All that is sinful in our nature is really remitted to the Baptised Believer, and those two words must go together. There is nothing promised to the believer who refuses or postpones baptism, nothing to the baptised who believes not.

2. But then, lastly, the desire is left for our exercise, for our trial, for our contest, our warfare, our crown; were there no desires there would be nothing for our reason or our will to do, no difficulties before us, no reward to be attained.

They are left as the trials of the wilderness were left to Israel after the deliverance of the Red Sea; left as the nations which the Lord left in Canaan, without driving

them out hastily : to prove Israel by them whether they would keep the way of the Lord to walk therein or not.

That is why our infirmities, our tendencies to evil, our weak parts are left in our characters, that we may heal, correct, and make them all up.

We have no words by which we can exactly describe, define, what grace is ; but we know what it is like in parables.

It is like a light of heaven shining in through an unbarred window in a long-closed, damp, dark room. Numbers of unwholesome and unhealthy plants have sprung up in its unused corners ; purblind creatures, a brood of darkness, have had their homes and their own way in it. A hand opens the hatches, and light and air stream through it. The place grows sweet of itself, the ill weeds die, the creeping things abandon it. It is dry and wholesome again ; it will soon be fit for the Master to inhabit.

Again ; the heart is left to our care like a castle given over to its constable by a king. "Observe," he says, "this fortress has been much injured in former years by enemies, but it has the makings of a fair castle about it still. There is peace now for a while ; my army of occupation holds the enemy at bay. It is your part to test every tower and every curtain-wall and buttress. And in the court there is a quarry, and I give you store of iron for bars. After a while I shall withdraw my forces, and the neighbouring territory will look to you for defence." What does the constable of the castle ? Does he amuse himself with hawking, hunting, banqueting ? Then, just at the time when all should have been safe, the enemy surge back again, and every breach they widen, and every remaining tower they mine, and their faces are gleaming in by every window and over every battlement.

God gives us store of grace, but He orders us to do the work.

He does not give us in baptism one of the virtues from which good actions spring ; they are to be obtained by striving with the help of that *power* which He does give.

We must rely on His helping us to attain them, and be very hopeful that we really shall attain them.

We must by daily practice persuade ourselves of what we are at first loth to believe, "That whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure," are also happy and joyous. But let us persevere, and we can and shall work ourselves into feeling it with a perfect conviction and a noble sense of strength.

Let us think of these things. and be in earnest about them. They will not disappoint us, and the God of peace will be with us.



## SERMON VI.

### THE DOCTRINE OF LAYING ON OF HANDS.

HEBREWS vi. 1.

*“ Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.”*

THE laying on of hands is here numbered among those facts which have great doctrines and eternal truths connected with them, and it is called one of the foundations of the faith. The passage speaks of “The principles of the doctrine of Christ ; the foundation of repentance and faith ; the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, of eternal judgment :” what a weighty list it occurs in.

The laying on of hands, then, was certainly not merely a solemn Eastern way of asking a blessing on the head of him upon whom the hands of his superior were laid—that he might be prospered in his work, for instance, and be strong and resolute in his duty. No one, using ordinary language in an intelligible way, would think of speaking of this explanation of such an act as a *teaching* or a *doctrine*.

No one could speak of a valediction or a benediction as one of the rudiments of a religion.

But the pouring into a human soul of that gift—which is to be had only from God Himself—which we call “grace,” that is “favour,” because no more definite word could express its freedom, its variety, its wide applicability ; the coming in and the continuance of this gift is constantly

spoken of as a Spirit-birth, a Spirit-growth, and this is a doctrine indeed.

This Spirit-birth is ever connected in the language of the New Testament with Christian Baptism, and the Spirit-growth is as commonly spoken of and set forth as ministered to man under the laying on of hands.

Our natural growth is not a process perfectly smooth and uniform. It has its pauses and its bursts, its checks, its sudden rushes towards completion, its winters and its springs. It resembles again the wonderful order in which the fertility of earth, the replenishing of its fountains and brooks, the health of man, is maintained; not every year alike, but now an ungenial season, and now some glorious radiance of weather, now long heat and dryness, then the very windows of heaven set open.

The passage from innocence to the knowledge of good and evil is one such burst in our inner life. We are not necessarily worse when we have passed it, but we are for a time either worse or better.

One boy will have found matter of contamination, will be lowered, coarsened, brutalized, it may be, by the knowledge of what is most mysterious, most true, most pure, if he has not felt the awfulness of the hand that fashioned him, and the seriousness of the impenetrable secret of life and death, and the sacredness which nature has stamped upon his every emotion. But another will have *felt* all these things though unable to express one of them to himself, and felt them not as warnings only against danger, but as invitations towards a higher strain of thought and life, because he will have felt that God's truth, and God's doings, and God's purposes are come nearer to his knowledge and yet deepened in mystery.

Few will have actually said to themselves all this in so many words, nor is it necessary that they should. But many are they who have at the time when the knowledge of good and evil opens out before them, chosen more or less consciously between the two. And other similar short periods of growth there are in after life also. The time when some of us have to choose our profession; the time

when we devote ourselves to acting in the world or on the world ; the time when our profession has settled down on us as a familiar thing, and by the way in which we meet its first few weeks of difficulties we determine perhaps whether it shall be to us for years an enthusiasm or a tedium ; the time of a man's first grief ; the time of a man's first love—all these are epochs laid out by God, when we are brought near by the laws of life to the centre of warmth and light, and when too we sweep with marvellous rapidity round it, and are sent away bearing its heat and light, if we have been receptive of them, into far other regions. Such stages of Spirit-growth are what the laying on of hands recognises, blesses, inspires. Naturally it is tied for all of us to the time of the first great burst in our natural life, for some of us to the choice of that sacred profession which *should* be both the simplest pattern of Christian life and the best and easiest rendering into act of how every profession should be but a various reading of God's service. The soldier's life is even nearer to sin, to misery, to death, and so claims even more of thoughtfulness than a clergyman's from all but those who do not wish to daily descend in the scale of creation to the likeness of mere animals ; and if the business-man's life has more temptations to selfishness, to unscrupulousness, to luxury, so much the more need has he of God's Spirit.

1. As such a type, and as such a means of growth, the laying on of hands is often and often mentioned. Its gift is so important that though there is never any wavering in the language used of Baptisms, yet sometimes when Confirmation alone is spoken of, it is in such terms as if the Holy Spirit were then given in a felt and practical sense almost for the first time. The birthright is as it were unconsciously received like our natural life, but not so the gift of growth. "Then the Apostles laid their hands on them, and *they received the Holy Ghost*, for as yet He was fallen upon none of them, only *they were baptised* in the name of the Lord Jesus." They had been baptised, and received the gift then ; but now He came with a perceptible power, fell on them and they felt Him.

Whatever, then, we may call the force by which our natural life is, as it were, in its own times matured and sent onward in new widening courses, the analogue to that in our spiritual life is the force intended to be set forth in our Confirmation. Baptism our new birth—the Laying on of Hands our growth.

2. Hence, we may easily see why in the theory of a vigorous living Church its chief pastors and governors should alone perform the rite for us. Through times of deadness, times when permanent rites, once full of meaning, become confused with mere forms, which may be altered with ease, there has been no change in this point.

Functions and ceremonials, however ancient and holy, out of which the element of personal influence and character and living moral force are gone, are but at the best fair records, and if applied to do the work which men of spirit once did, are miserable delusions; and again, personal influence without organisation is weak and transitory. We cannot *sever* in this great world the ordinance and the administrator. The administrator must work as part of a system, but he must inspire with life the part which comes to him. Amid most altered circumstances, the chief pastor still will inspire the office of the hour: a spirit and a power which gladdens and strengthens, and makes men feel that not in vain is the master-builder still asked to crown the building which others strive to rear.

This practice, though it was not in the ancient Church absolutely universal, was derived from the practice (as we read in Acts vii.) that while others baptised, the Apostles went down and laid their hands on the baptised, and imparted to them the Holy Ghost.

3. The question arises, Is Confirmation then held as generally necessary—*i.e.* necessary for all—to salvation like the two Sacraments, seeing that any gift of vital growth must be so unspeakably important?

And here we answer *no*, because it is not growth but only *life* which is absolutely indispensable. Growth is the aim of nature, her energetic working against innumerable difficulties, an aim which she endeavours to accomplish by

a thousand ways, struggling against destruction, to bring all things to perfection and completion ; but maturity is after all achieved by the minority only of existences. The forces of grace struggle no less than those of nature ; they work in the world and strain to bring fruit to perfection ; yet here, too, spiritual maturity is only of the minority. Yet their life cannot count for nothing who attain something less than the stature of the fulness of Christ.. It may not be manhood, but it is Life. And this too is set forth in this Holy Confirmation : good for all, and by none to be neglected, but not essential to the Christian idea of preparation for eternal life.

4. It has been for many ages well parted by the Church from baptism, of which it originally formed the concluding portion. In this the Church has exercised the discretion given her not slavishly to adhere to old models, but to consider that the end of all her work is edification. It was felt that after the time was passed when adults were converted, instructed, and baptised—when we began to be dedicated and hallowed from infancy—that it was well to postpone Confirmation till there was intelligence and some strength of will. After a boy at school has had his first bitter taste of what sin is in himself, and thought what an evil it is in the world, has learnt something of his own want of strength and need of a helper, has felt that he would be only too thankful for something to check him, has feared lest some flood of sin may overpower him,—what a divine message to him is the message of Confirmation, the check we need, the hand of Christ held out, the rock reached ! The boy need not fear the foolish, ugly laughter which pursues him because he will not join in vanities ; he need fear nothing if he will be true to himself, for there is something else to do than to fill his mind with sinful pleasures. He has heard a call, and will not disobey.

Is his fault easiness ? is it want of sympathy ? does he feel that he has no assurance that he can resist any temptation ? does he feel that he cares very little for other persons' greatest trials, and that he frets very much over his own smallest trials ? and does the weakness and

narrowness of such a nature make him think at times that it is not in him to rise to real truth and manliness, he will remember that what is not in him is nevertheless in the stores of God, and that God here offers to open His stores to him and give him as much as he needs.

He from whom all the Apostles stole away when they saw Him made a prisoner did not disdain to give those same Apostles strength to encounter the world itself soon after, to face the worst and to conquer. Peter himself denied having anything to do with Him at the question of a servant, just as a boy at school who is asked an insulting question about his religion has before now felt ashamed to tell the truth and say that he did mean to lead a religious, conscientious life; yet He who made Peter strong again will surely have strength enough to help you, if you will but once for all go through Peter's repentance, and then begin again with Peter's rising spirit.

5. For both you who have been confirmed, and you whose Confirmation is now so near, ought earnestly to think what Confirmation or strengthening you have received or hope to receive.

You must not come to Confirmation expecting either before or after it that God is to do all, and you to do nothing. A steadier religious feeling, trust and faith towards God, sorrow for past sins; these are *conditions* which you *can* already fulfil, and therefore God requires them absolutely. All his promises are on *conditions*, *conditions* which He Himself no doubt has brought within your power, but which being within your power it would be unreasonable to suppose that you need not fulfil.

We have spoken of these conditions formerly in speaking of baptism; for though baptism itself cannot be repeated for any one, yet it is a new outpouring of baptismal strength you pray for, and a new ratifying of baptismal promises on your part.

But there is one point of difference: since the innocence in which you were baptised, when your birth-sin only rested on you, you have known what actual sin is, and you have been guilty of it. But some here and there are

inclined to think that they have been only guilty of *little* sins ; that there is not so much to be repented of as there might have been.

Now I will not say much of sad experiences which have made me feel how poor a defence against the temptations of the world mere boyish harmlessness is : how one who has not gained something of stubborn, resolute spirit, and known how to hold his own on the side of good while he was a boy, is very little likely to do so when he is a man ; how the boy whose commonly unruffled temper and good-nature, indulgent at once towards himself and towards others, have made him, perhaps, liked by all, and at the same time not the least looked up to by any one, rarely or never makes a true man, and how one grieves to see such an one pass out into the world, knowing that he has not half learnt what school life ought most to teach him ; I will not, I say, dwell further on my experience of such a case, because it requires experience reaching beyond school days to have observed it, or to even perhaps understand it. But I think most can follow if I try to show very shortly why the little sins do indeed need to be repented of in earnest and very sorrowfully.

1. A little sin is just as important as a great one for showing you what is in the character.

The absence of an element of audacity, or the want of opportunity, may be the only reason why you have never done an open sin.

It is your nature, your heart, your inclination, at which God looks, and you will remember that Christ more than once does speak of some open sinners as less guilty than many who were respectable outwardly. The one had been tempted to sin by grievous circumstances, the others had never been exposed to such dangers. But the eye of Christ saw even worse hearts among those who excused their sins as being little, than among those who had greatly fallen.

You will understand me, I am sure. I am not making all offences equal, for there are great differences in the degree of guilt. But I am pointing out that the littleness

of a sin may only prove that you have not been strongly tempted to do worse, and that its occurring at all is a proof of a sinful state which needs to be forgiven and forsaken. You have not told an open falsehood ; but then you know an equivocation served your turn. You have not committed such another sin, but, alas ! you have wished you could. And what our Master requires is not a heart that is but partially false, but one that is wholly true. He requires truth in the inward parts. It is only the pure *in heart* that shall see God.

2. Sins are often little while at school—almost or quite unknown. There are many reasons for concealing them, or even quite postponing them. But then, the evil will often break out after, and is sure to do so in the character of one who has looked to his acts only and not to his thoughts, or to his public acts and not to his conversation with his private friends. If we are not disciplining ourselves, breaking ourselves in, as it were, making the body the servant of the mind and soul, and not its master, we are not doing much. If we do not attach as much importance to our words as to our acts, and as much to our thoughts as to our words, we are doing precisely what the Pharisees said was sufficient : we make clean the outside, but we neglect the inside ; we may be well thought of by those who see our decorous appearance, and apparently simple manners, but this is not the narrow path that leadeth unto life. This is not the baptismal vow ; this is not the salvation which Christ died to give us.

3. After all, the great question for every one to ask himself is not so much, Have I abstained from doing wrong ? as, Have I tried to do good ? Have I been anxious that my turn of mind should be good ; have I striven to be diligent though I felt the tendency to idleness ; have I been true in word and deed ; have I made up my mind to be temperate and abstinent when luxury and sensuality appealed to me ?

Then, whether past or future, Confirmation, with its expressive meanings, and varying gifts, stored with all you want, yet refusing and denying you one atom of grace



beyond that which you are in earnest about obtaining, is fit to be an era in your growth. It cannot but be such an era, whether it does you good or harm ; you cannot pass through it without its influencing you strongly. What can be more hardening than the misuse of it ? To come to it, and through it to the Holy of Holies itself—the Body and Blood—and then to turn away from it, and care no more about it, not because you have tried it and been disappointed in what it could do for you, but because you did not wish that it should be anything at all, or if you once did wish it, have lost the desire.

But if you are ever so weak, you can be in earnest ; if you have ever so little strength, you need not deny Christ's name ; and countless are they, now happy and strong for ever, who would tell you that they have been in their time as weak or weaker than you, and that among all the praises of God which are for ever on their lips, there is now none dearer to them than this, that they were indeed so weak, for they love God so that they rejoice more to feel it was His loving strength which saved them, than they could have triumphed if it had been their own ; and that they would rather bear witness to the world of this than of anything else, that God is verily able out of weakness to make strong.

And now, then, since in a few moments we shall draw near to that Table of the Lord—to which we hope shortly to admit many of your number, and shall be to-day the smallest because the last congregation of the year for those confirmed already, so many of whom have in the year's course passed to other scenes, yet smaller than we need be, because some fall into careless ways who might be helping us with their presence and their prayers, and fail through forgetfulness duly to prepare themselves, and partly fall into the heedless way of saying, "I shall come a fortnight hence ; I need not come to-day." Let me say a few words to these. What does that practically mean ? Is it not an ungrounded self-assurance to say, "I have strength for the next fortnight ; I need no strength to-day" ? Would it were true. But, at any rate, *we* need

your prayers. Christ needs your presence at the muster-roll of His army. The Father needs His sons. I would not have you stay with uneasy consciences, in unrepentance, in formality; it is late to resolve; it is better perhaps your prayers should be alone; but *do* let us have your prayers, if we have not your presence.

What I would really urge on you is this—and more and more affectionately as time grows short—it is this which I have been setting before all. 1. That our spiritual life is a *growth*—a God-given growth, because we can no more make ourselves grow than we can create ourselves. 2. That human strength is in all cases a strength quietly, gradually developed, step by step. 3. That it cannot be developed unless on the condition that *you* do your part, as gladly welcoming, forwarding, seconding the growth and the strength. 4. That it cannot be developed unless you put it to the proof by abstinence from sin, by mastering reluctance, by exerting yourselves to do positive good.

These are bald, distinct, unmistakable facts of human nature and spiritual life; nor can we fail to see in what relation to these facts stands the accepting ordinance of Confirmation framed by Apostolic wisdom, and the constructive upbuilding, invigorating power of the Blessed Eucharist bequeathed by the Divine Master of the Soul, the Saviour of the Body. Now, and to our lives' end, may that strength be made perfect in our weakness.

## SERMON VII.

### RESURRECTION LIGHT.

HEB. vi. 2.

*“Of the resurrection from the dead.”*

THE apostolic writer does not separate the Resurrection of Christ from the doctrine of our future Resurrection. He clearly regards as one the whole subject—Christ’s resurrection the first-fruit of our own, ours the fulfilment of what is begun in Him.

But clearly we must separate them in order to speak of them at all. Remote as we are from the first event, and no longer expecting the second to occur in a few years perhaps,—the Resurrection of the Dead has not quite the same oneness to either our minds or our hearts. They most likely do together commend themselves to our reflections, together lay hold of our affection ; but whether they do or not, it is inevitable that we look on them as parted widely asunder.

Another Sunday we will dwell on *our* Resurrection from the Dead—on the Resurrection of *our* Dead—to-day more on the greatest fact in all past history.

For it is wholly, it is simply, it is plainly as an event in history that it is recorded, not as a glorious aspiration realised, not as a grand doctrine embodied, not as the hope of immortality made concrete, but as a fact unexpected beforehand, startling when it was first announced, then realised over and over again as a certainty ; then, last of all, understood, interpreted, embraced.

The accounts of our Lord's Resurrection are not composed with any view of persuading unbelievers. That was done in many arguments as the first duty of Christian thinkers and writers, but not in the Gospels. They are very simple narrations, given for the further and accurate informing of persons who believed already. Many as were the points on which the first believers, and even the Apostles differed, there is no question that this was accepted of all. Their action proves their belief, if any action can be said to assure conviction. That they *can* have been deceived as to the emptiness of the tomb, and as to the identity of Him who lived with them forty days, with Him whom they had lost three days before, passes the bounds of common sense; but what evidence for such a fact can be stronger than the very incredulity of the Apostles? One and all they refused to believe it when they were told by others. One and all they surrendered themselves to it, with all its results, so soon as they had *seen* Him Who was reported to be alive. So certain were they of it, so keenly conscious of its eternal importance, when once convinced of it, that to have been a witness of it, to have seen Him after He rose from the dead, became a necessary qualification for apostleship.

And let us consider what evidence could possibly have been more convincing to *us*, more worthy of being sent down the stream of time, for all ages to note and know, than records written *by* such persons, and *for* such persons, by witnesses for believers.

Could a body of scientific investigators—if such a thing had not been anomalous, inconceivable, an anachronism—have applied tests and drawn up documents so full of conviction for us? Their work would have been a mere exercise in the first place for all subsequent ingenuity, and, in the second place, the most suspicious form in which a narrative could have come to us. “Why all this apparatus of investigation?” it would have been said. “Why all this anxious care to give such detail? What stimulated the observation, in the first instance, if it was not a distinct sense of the improbability, and an unsatisfactory eagerness

to anticipate objections? Surely, if these men believed it, they would have given us a plain, unvarnished statement, such as they have given of the rest of His life, and one that would dwell more on the moral force than on the physical phenomena. Surely, if they knew themselves worthy of credit, and expected to be believed, they would have told us what went on under their eyes and the eyes of their friends, with simplicity, with dignity, with confidence." Would this not have been demanded? And is not this the very narrative we have?

The next point which I want you to notice with me, is that it was wholly unlike any previous Jewish expectation—even contrary to the usual Jewish belief about Messiah, wholly at variance with what the disciples had looked for. They *had* fancied that Elias would return to earth; they had imagined it possible that John the Baptist should have risen from the dead. They had seen Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, Lazarus himself, just as they had read of those resuscitated in the Old Testament. But resurrection—but return to the ordinary conditions of human life—with another death and decay, is not Resurrection. And there is not a word or thought which anywhere brings within the range of Jewish ideas what we mean by Resurrection. We mean a new body which yet is not wholly unconnected with the old; we mean a glorified body which is *not* liable to death, which is *not* governed any more by conditions which regulate human life, which is fitted for a heavenly spiritual existence—I use words here which I do not understand, except in mere shadow—but a body about which we can say that it is no longer of the earth earthly, but lord of new faculties, dowered with new capabilities, glorious, immortal, and not subject to sin.

Again, they had expectations of Messiah; but none involving Resurrection, for there were none that involved *Death*; a glorious and victorious career—not without difficulties, but full of conquest. This was the Jewish notion. A death of shame, and the contrast of the Resurrection was wholly remote from their conception.

Again, the Disciples had no such ideas; when they were assured of it, it seemed to them "as idle tales," and they believed it not. "Unbelief," "hardness of heart," "slowness of heart to believe," "faithlessness"—these were the feelings, and this the mental state on which the heavenly news fell. Christ's death was to them an end of all their hopes, they said; they thought there was nothing left for them but to go back to their old employments.

There was nothing in the world—no idea, no hope, no aspiration that anything might or would happen in the manner of Christ's Resurrection.

There is only one term which can be properly applied to it—it was a New Revelation.

Like a new revelation it began to work. It brought forth fruits worthy of a new revelation. Look what a change it wrought instantly in the Apostles. Mark the difference between Christians with the Resurrection and Christians without it—as they were before. Many and many are the remarkable changes wrought in man by conversion; you see a person in whom there was little for us to love, nothing to respect, making a sudden bound from darkness into light, becoming one whom we not only love and respect, but even reverence for the power of goodness that is seen in him, for the earnestness with which he "sets God always before him;" but no change I ever heard or read of compares with the change in the Apostles. They who had fled away when their Master was in trouble, stand forth prominent before people, and priests, and magistrates—prominent and fearless; not only strung up to endure with fortitude, but "rejoicing that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."

They, who a little while ago had fixed their hopes at highest on the creation of a small monarchy, from which the Romans would be expelled, are suddenly seen to look down on all the powers of the world—an empire of souls, miracle-working faith, an immortality of glory; this is the new, the only realm.

What a change in the character of these men—a transformation, a complete transformation from timidity and

commonplace ambition to perfect courage, and the highest type of character. The men are the same as before. Their individual traits, characteristic acts and sayings, are in the Acts of the Apostles what they were in the Gospel ; but the men are transfigured before us by the simple effect which it had on them to have seen and conversed with Him who had been dead and was alive—alive for evermore.

But the change in their view of what Christ himself was is as marked as the change in their own characters. It was not like the affectionate credulity (it has been well said) with which an oppressed state or party believes in the reappearance of a lost leader. The faith they preached was new. Sentence after sentence had fallen from Christ's lips which they had never understood. He had told them how He was the Bread of Life ; how He would give His flesh for the life of the world ; how that He was in the Father and the Father in Him ; that he who had seen Him had seen the Father ; that to believe in Him was everlasting life ; that he who was made one with Him should never die—should be raised up at the last day ; that for every one who trusted in Him sin and death should be abolished eternally. They had heard all this, but without the slightest trace remaining that they had understood these things, and made them their own. Their very conduct up to the hour, and after the hour, of the Crucifixion shows that they had taken them in metaphorically, if at all ; and indeed we are expressly told, more than once, "They understood not these things."

But no sooner is Christ risen from the dead than a veil is lifted ; they appreciate the meaning ; they grasp the doctrine. They announce to all men—not that their sect is reassembled because their Head is restored to them—that they still hold the same position as to Sadduceeism, Pharisaism, Messiahship, that their spirit and their views are unbroken. It is a new spring that bursts from the ground. What they have to tell is, "that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." "That to be baptised into the name of Jesus Christ is the remission of sins ;" and this to those

who had just put Him to death ; and this with such effect, that thousands in the city where it had happened little more than a month before, and among them many priests, lay hold by faith upon Jesus Christ as the one and only author of Eternal Salvation.

For you must not understand Christianity to be a rule of life and duty, the excellence of which is sanctioned by God through the miracles that Christ showed, and the holiness of His life, and the supernatural power of His Resurrection—that is not all. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, Jesus Christ was God incarnate, for ~~this~~ end—that you might come to Him and cast your burden of sin on Him, and pray for and receive His Spirit to dwell in you, and be made one with Him, partake of, literally partake of, His Divine Nature through the Spirit, as He partook of your nature by being born. That is Christianity. That is the Truth which the Resurrection and Christ's eternal glorified humanity implies.

Now, look at the matter once more from another side. You have instinct, and you have reason. What do they tell you about sin? Reason is quite inexorable on the point, and perfectly clear. She tells you, and shows you in a thousand ways, that every single action has consequences of endless importance ; that the effects of things you do and say affect others in continually spreading ways ; that the thoughts you think are continually working in your character and moulding it ; that your character as a human being is not your own concern only ; that it is knit up with the web of human life, and has AN EFFECT ; that it affects even other generations much more than those about you ; that, in fact, the words, and thoughts, and deeds of any person are a thread in the pattern of the whole world ; that every single person in the world has an infinite importance, and that the forming and exemplifying of his character (which we call his life) cannot, by any possibility, ever pass away and be lost.

Reason accordingly points out the difference between moral and immoral acts—in other words, between righteousness and sin ; shows you that your sin can never



disappear in itself, or in its effects; that it is an accumulating burden. This is the only utterance of Reason on the subject of sin, and therefore, she continues, your punishment is equally certain. In fact, it is not punishment; it is the natural consequence and effect of your sin, the fruit of your tree, the harvest of the seed you sowed; and part of your punishment will be the sight of the evil you have brought upon others; you will see them estranged from God as you will be yourself. Whatever good you do henceforth, you cannot alter the evil you have done already.

So says Reason, and after that her lips are sealed. On the other hand, you hear the voice of instinct within, and it says, "Surely God will bring good out of evil; surely He will somehow remove evil, remit sin, excuse punishment for those who turn to Him repentant, and eager henceforth to serve Him."

But Reason replies with a clear voice, "The Effects of every Cause remain."

But now, beloved, while the eternal conflict between Reason and Instinct is thus proceeding, while the spirit of man is gradually giving way, as he feels that Reason is infallible, and is not so sure of his Instinct, behold between them enthroned the awful form, the loving face of the Risen God-Man, the Sinless One, who died and lives. See His mortal wounds; gaze on His immortality.

Instinct was right—Reason was right, though they were contrary, for in Him they are reconciled. The consequences of sin—He took them Himself for all believers; though He had not committed sin the cause, He took on Him sin in its effect (that is punishment), and sin melted away on Him like snowflakes falling into a summer air. He took, He bore as a man, even the last extremity of punishment— isolation from God. The sense of God's support, the sense of God's love, the brightness and strength of God whereon He leaned, died out of His sight in the utmost hour of need, as the light fades out of the sky for one who passes into unconsciousness with his eyes open wide towards it.

It passed out of His sight while He still lived and thought with a man's powerful intellect; He could see it nowhere,

nor any signs of it, when there broke from Him the exceeding-bitter cry, "My God! my God! why hast *Thou* forsaken me?"

So it was wrought—what we call the Atonement—the consequence of sin borne by the Sinless One to the last extremity, and cancelled for each sinful man who will unite himself through faith and love and hope, at the call and by the operation of the Spirit, with *Him*. Of His Atonement the one assuring seal is the Resurrection, whereby He bore our human nature, sinless and triumphant, away from the world into the presence of God. He died for our sin; He rose again for our justification.

The mystery of the Atonement is like the mystery of the Incarnation itself, like the mystery of our own united souls and bodies, and many more, inexpressible by us in terms. Enough for us that it enables us to reach God, to know that our sins may be forgiven, that the instinct which prompted to repent was not deceived.

Oh let us make the Forgiveness of Sins our own, through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead. Let us come to Him, counting the sore temptations of animal existence to be things utterly despised in comparison with the everlasting life that He has revealed to us—come to Him; little heeding the grief which the sin of old days has brought on us through the mischief it has wrought on our characters, little regarding even the failure of those we trust, the coldness of those who ought to help us on; not stumbling at the hindrance that poor weak lives, selfish principles, unconscientiousness on the part of those that are highly esteemed, must necessarily be, if our eyes are not set on Him who rose, and if the word "Saintliness" does not burn ever before our eyes in living letters traced by His finger.

Let us come now, determined not to sin and not to die—determined to be pure, but proud only of what He has done for us—determined to attain to everlasting Life by winning Christ Himself, for in Him is Life.

## SERMON VIII.

### THE ETERNAL DISTINCTION.

HERREWS vi. 2.

*“And of eternal judgment.”*

WE are come to-day to the last of the elements of Christian knowledge which the Apostle enumerates. And it is the very subject to which this day itself would have guided us.

Let us use a few minutes of this Holy Advent Sunday in trying earnestly and reverently to hear the anticipation of Christ's Coming which the Church is sounding.

We have spoken of Repentance from Dead Works, of Faith towards God, of the Doctrine of Baptisms, and of the Resurrection of the Dead, and we now come to what follows after death—Eternal Judgment ; or, if I translate the words in the plainest, most literal, most unconventional way I can, —“The age-long distinction.”

The words say that there will be a drawing of a line, or marking off ; a distinguishing of class from class. They imply that it will be done by God Himself ; the same God who placed us all together in this world will divide asunder in the world to come. They imply that it will be on moral grounds, and on no others. No intellectual, social, personal advantages will weigh. It is the distinction between “good and bad” which will then be made, and made without wavering or error.

They imply vast duration for the distinction : a distinction as long and permanent as human words and human thought can reach. If they do not say “a distinction without any

end," they do say a distinction of which human language can express, the intellect of man can comprehend, no close—it will be "The distinction of ages."

It is this "distinction for ages," then, for which we in this world prepare—a distinction which death will never interrupt. The Death which interrupts and levels all distinctions of this life, and has so often rolled crowns of kings among the feet of the crowd, and heaped proud tombs with such dishonour that the meanest mound of sods is better than they, will not interfere there. The verdict of posterity will sound ever in living ears from living tongues, and it will be then in perfect unison with the Verdict of God.

That distinction declared to last through ages of eternity carries till the appointed ages of time are past, till we are each restored to personal existence by reunion with our own immortal body. And what in the interval? Will consciousness of personal existence disappear meanwhile? Where shall we be, what shall we do, when in obedience to God's command our soul wanders forth from us? Who shall say? That is a dark and silent region—yet as we look out through the waste, we see one or two lamps gleaming far off. One or two words of Christ and His Apostles seem to show that though the land of the shadow of death is for *us* a land of shadow, yet it has sun and stars of its own.

For did not St. Paul, looking on his weary unsatisfying work, say that for himself it were far better he should depart and be with Christ, as though he knew that the departed really were with Christ?

And we know also of two who in awful and strange companionship left this world in extreme pain, almost side by side; and one of them, He who alone can be the Light of that other darkness, spake under the eclipse, and said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Not in heaven itself, but in some region whose name, borrowed from the genesis of earth and man, speaks to us of beauty and tranquillity and sinlessness, and the presence of God in Christ.

A state of imperfection doubtless, where spirits are unclothed nor yet clothed upon, waiting for a glory to be

revealed, where even the souls of martyrs sigh "Lord, how long?" waiting their reunion to the body in which alone they can attain perfection in all their nature;—a land where rises even more longingly than from earth the prayer, "Thy kingdom come!"—a land where it is felt more yet than on earth that there is One God and Father of all, whose glory is desired most ardently in our salvation.

We must pause : we dare not venture beyond the threshold. We dare not say what memories they retain, how much comes to them in clear sight or in vision of what is going on upon the earth. But surely the thought of that vast land where all the hosts of the past are living still, manifold myriads more than are in earth, has or ought to have a strong influence on us, as we think of those whom we knew that are there, and of our certain arrival there some day.

But one thing we may be sure of—that the eternal distinction is there begun. The good are there. The evil minds, the evil souls, the evil wills of earth are there also.

And then this thought rises on our minds with a certain conviction, that whether there are memories still there, and other things belonging to a personal existence, or whether for a while all individualizing types are suspended, and the holy souls are, as it were, bathed in a tranquil sea of love and knowledge, floating ever forward only in God—in either case it is a region of perpetual advance and growth and progress. If the latter, we need not speak of it—it is best spoken of in silence of heart—but let us think of the other.

If we on earth spend but one week, spend but one day, in the company of one who is really holy and just and pure (and withal too brave and true to hide from us his judgment and his feeling, however he may be veiled in humility all the while), what a difference do those few hours or days make to us if we are but determined to enjoy and surrender ourselves to the influence of such a man!

And what will it be when all the holy, all the wise, all the just, all the true, all the brave of all ages people Paradise together? What will be their influence on each other—what will be their influence on any weaker one, yet true

of heart, who finds himself among them? Free from all tempting, free from all distraction, no disturbing thought, or word, or act; and brooding over them the Presence of Christ—nowhere missed, nowhere forgotten.

Is it presumptuous to deem that perhaps to the utterly ignorant of this earth that is where their ignorance will be made up to them? that they who sinned, yet who would never have done one sin wilfully had they been brought within reach of the influences which have acted on us—and surely there are innumerable of these—have nought but to dwell in that air, and grow holy by the mere drinking in of the felt and visible grace which breathes around them?

But who can conceive as mingling at all among these holy ones those who have had all holiness set before them, and are not holy? those who have known the horror of wickedness and yet been wicked? those who have loved nothing, cared for nothing but themselves? whose dull eyes looked on all things noble and true, and never flashed and never wept; but when they fell on alien goods, on deadly, crawling shapes of lust and sin, gleamed bright with greed and sensuality, and *they*—they flung themselves upon the spoil—the spoil that perished in the using.

Concerning these the most painful thought is this, that their sin will then have destroyed the taste and liking for all that is higher, all that is better. Charitableness and tenderness over the memories of the dead cannot help persuading itself that they are happy, would fain think of them as in heaven. But would they, the wicked of the earth, be even *happy* in heaven? There is not the slightest ground for thinking that death gives us new tastes—makes the soul love that which it had despised and rejected. It is not in death to do that.

There still will be the hungry desires which they had never subdued, and no power of feeding them; and pain such as this is worse than all pains. Their own presence, their own longings, filling all with nameless, endless wickedness—as the communion of saints makes the very element in which they exist holy, so over these must brood the very Power of Evil.

Of both estates we have faint images on earth. The converse of the good increasing goodness and nobleness for each and all, the association of the wicked rousing ever new motives, new incentives to sin, new temptations,—deceiving others, and being deceived; corrupting and corrupted. Families and societies, and cities and nations, have risen and have perished as they exemplified these tendencies.

But these things plainly have not their climax upon earth; each is but seen in transit here. Here are undeveloped the powers of evil and of good; they are going on towards their own place. The tendency is seen working here—the goal they reach is there.

The “Eternal Distinction,” we are told, shall culminate as it were on one day: the day when there shall be such a manifestation of God dealing openly with His creation and His creatures as there has not been since the beginning. Whether the day thus spoken of shall be like the days we now know, or whether it shall be like the days of creation, we cannot say. The judgment of the world, the making of new heavens and a new earth, these are the acts reserved for that day; and each one of us will see it—not as a spectator, but as one so deeply concerned in it that to him it will appear as if all its terror, all its glory were being revealed unto him alone. To each of us the Judge will draw near and we shall be judged. May He grant that in that day we may be recognised by Him as His own. But we know that if He is to recognise us there, He must know us here. If that judgment is to leave us saved, it must be because we have passed many judgments on ourselves already, and whereinsoever we have condemned ourselves therein repented and therein amended.

What judgments will be passed upon us there which we may anticipate by judgments of ourselves here?

Let us consider that we are *men*; not spiritual beings, but mortal; not instinct-led like animals, but reasonable. We shall be judged upon those things which we possess as men; and those Judgments are Three.

There will be the Judgment of Time. Time is a gift of our own, peculiar to ourselves. The lower races take no count of time, the higher live in eternity; but we live in Time, and as a gift it is our most precious. It is that by the judicious careful use of which we grow wiser, we grow better, we gain knowledge, we increase in capacity, we turn to good account all that we have. Time may seem given equally to all. It is given to all, but not equally. It is most copiously bestowed on you, the young; and because you have it in such affluence, therefore you see it is God's way to cause the use of it to make such enormous differences to you,—to settle for after life your position, your rank, your worth in the eyes of others, your life's work, almost your character. In middle life we have scarce any time; the positions which we hold claim it all, or nearly all—(except men are very rich, in which case they have still a heavier burden to bear); and it is with a feeling almost amounting to agony that a man in middle life will look on a boy allowing the time, which he himself has learnt to prize so high, to run to waste—with which we look on a boy who is winning, engaging, clever perhaps, with every motive to make good use of time, and to know what a fire his misspent hours are kindling, what a fire of vexation and self-contempt for after years,—to see his abilities sinking down below the most ordinary level, his fresh character wasting itself like a rill of water pouring into sand.

Well, for this wasted time there is a judgment to come, and what will it be? "Take the talent away from him." He will have that which cannot be wasted, which cannot be saved, one everlasting now: a perpetual consciousness of evil done, evil within, evil without—evil that cannot be escaped from, which has no future, no past, but is always there unchangeable.

I have seen those upon whom a diseased brain seems to have brought down this grievous pain in this life. They will no doubt be among the first to be healed and restored in the life to come; and how great to them the joy of passing from the glooms of this life to the exulting sense



of new-bestowed reason and powers in that life. But as you see them with eyes fixed in utter melancholy, unconscious of the passage of time or of events or the presence of others, wrapt wholly in the ever-present, dwelling on some saddest thought or fancy, it is a fearful image (perhaps given for the very purpose) of what is the state of a soul which has before it only the unchangeable thought of lost opportunity, lost time, present powerlessness.

From the Judgment of Lost Time, good Lord deliver us.

And then there is the Judgment of Wasted Ability. How vast is that waste! Some there are who waste what they have because they will not admit that they have it, or because they have not cultivated it hitherto; some because they profess to think that their lives here offer no future in which ability will much avail, as if even the poorest work were not better done by a cultivated man than by an ignorant one, and as if even the noblest work were not perpetually put by God's providence into the hands that are fit for it in the most unexpected ways; and some there are who even talk of what they could achieve if only they chose to work, and fancy that empty imagination makes them of more consequence than achieving less by diligence. What is the sure judgment upon all these? Even the same that will be for wasters of time—"Take the talent away from him."

And, thirdly, there is the Judgment of Responsibility.

Often have we endeavoured to show you how innumerable are your responsibilities, how they multiply on you, in spite of yourselves, every year you live. Whoever denies his responsibilities when he is young, others can see if he cannot, how those who are about him suffer, and are misled, and sometimes almost perish in consequence. He hardens his heart and goes out into the world, and his responsibilities thicken, and faster and faster others suffer because he ignores the fact that he has any duties towards them. But others looking on can see how parents, brothers and sisters, friends, companions, are made happy, are raised, are stimulated by one who feels his responsibility; how dull, how poor, how weak life grows around him who owns

not his responsibilities, while he moves on in idiot mirth roused by the meanest things. But will there come no awaking, will there come no vengeance? Yes, there will be the most perfect and minute knowledge ever present to him of what *might* have been, and he will pine always as he looks upon what *is*.

And now, as we think of these Three Judgments, and know within ourselves how we stand within reach of them, how—except God forgive us for the past, and give us His Holy Spirit for the future—we have no hope of escaping them, there rises in our hearts the sad question, “But will there not be all kinds of cross divisions, merit recognised there, even if sin is visited here? Will there not be infinite allowances made?” Yes, no doubt. But look at this reasonably, and does not that thought make it far more dreadful? Everything will be allowed, even to the uttermost farthing—but, that done, the uttermost farthing of our debt will be demanded. No one will complain that the fullest allowance has not been made. The sense that there has been perfect justice done will be the one last shadow of justice which will abide in the soul of the wicked.

No, there is no comfort in the thought that God will make allowances. The sole comfort is in Faith and in Repentance, in Discipline and Reformation.

## SERMON IX.

### OUR FORTITUDE A TRUE FAITH.

JOHN xiv. 1.

*"Let not your heart be troubled, (ye) believe in God, believe also in me."*

I HAVE taken this text upon this Sunday as the very simplest form of words in which our Lord speaks of a right faith as powerful, and alone powerful to allay trouble of heart—to allay it, not as books or busy occupations will beguile sorrow and perplexity, but as supplying to us that spiritual strength and positive force which defies while it feels the shock.

This is the meaning of the Collect which belongs to Trinity Sunday. We beseech God to keep us firm in the belief of the Trinity in Unity in which He exists, *and* to defend us from *all* that is hostile and injurious to us, either spiritually or physically. There is a word in it we should pause a moment to explain—"that we may be defended from all *adversity*." Adversity has come of late to bear such a contracted meaning, signifying only distress of circumstances, or merely the struggles of poverty—that, in using the Collect, we must remember that it originally bore a very large meaning, that, viz., of all things that are against us, either in our worldly lives, or in our spiritual strength, health, purity—the most general words possible to signify the adverse efforts of darkness against us.

The prayer then is this—(1) that we may know the real personal distinctness from each other of Him The

unapproachable Fountain of Existence—of Him The Love that in human form did victorious battle with sin and death,—and of Him The Inspiring Life that animates us.

The distinctness of the Universal Father, the one *Will* of the universe—of the Son, obedient, like ourselves, to that Will—of the Holy Spirit, by Whose indwelling we are conformed to that Will.

(2) That we may know that this distinctness is no contradiction (owing to the mysteriousness to us of the Divine Nature) to the truth that the Lord our God is One Lord.

(3) Having thus prayed to know and to hold fast this truth of eternal things as they are in themselves, not as they might seem, we pray that this Sublime, Eternal, Creating, Loving, Animating Being would put forth for us His power, and defend us against every single thing which in our weakness and our ignorance may be bad for us.

And this prayer implies three other facts. 1. It implies the confession that our Humanity is too weak to stand alone against attacks. 2. It implies the confidence that God will enable it to stand if we trust Him; and the enabling power which comes from Him to us we call grace. 3. It implies also that if we will not recognise Truth, and if we will not seek grace, we shall be left to stand alone.

And this is true—true in personal experience, true in the history of mankind.

And now, first, I would have you notice that this doctrine (whose greatness, at any rate in relation to all life and thought, is both by believers and unbelievers acknowledged, and the special recognition of which has this day the last of the Church's Divine Commemorations dedicated to it), is most appropriately so observed for this cause, viz., because it celebrates the accordance and unity of God's Revelation with Man's highest Reason. The doctrine is neither the unassisted conclusion of man, although many philosophers have culminated in a point very near to it, nor is it the explicit statement of one single text in the Bible.

The Doctrine is the necessary result of Human Reason, accepting into itself the one fact of the Incarnation. A Truth-seeking philosophy, proceeding step by step from that basis, a searching criticism bent on finding out the very truest sense, by grammatical and historical methods, of God's Revelation to man, arrives again and again at the Doctrine of the Trinity.

And no single treatise of philosophy, no single doctrine, or tenet, or principle which is established, rests on more conclusive chains of reasoning. Disinterested, unbiased minds which will not say, "It is not to my mind possible, therefore it is not," &c.—which will not again say, "The possession of this Truth has not produced in the world, and in the lives of men I know, such effects as I should expect the possession of Truth to produce," can arrive at it along a path of demonstration. And thus remains the Truth that should make us glad—that the loftiest, farthest off, deepest, and most embracing of all doctrines, springs from the alliance of Divine Revelation with Human Thought.

Christmas celebrates the Doctrine God with Man.

Ascension Day, Man with God.

Whitsun Day, God in Man.

And Trinity Sunday celebrates in the fulness of their mutual relations God and Man.

And now, while we in such calmness and quietude here are giving up our thoughts this Sunday to this vast embracing Truth, which, like the blue sky, bends over men above, and yet belongs both to Earth and Heaven undistinguishably, let us think of the dreadful quietude—the despairing calmness, a stillness so unlike our own, in which the first Sunday for so long a period has settled down on the next European capital and on a sister country.

I do not mean that all can be over in a land which, after a century of uncertainty, still knows not whether it be a Kingdom or a Republic—a mass of dissolved Towns or an Empire. But, at any rate, exhausted passion stands in the attitude of declaring—hideous resolve for a first

principle—that it will shed no more blood at present without knowing why.

Nor will I attempt presumptuously to lay down what are the far-off causes that hurled all the currents of a nation into this Maelstrom of misery, gazing on its spent fury; but upon a Sunday, which celebrates here the acceptance by devout faith of that which the careless observer calls an *opinion*, and which clings to the Divine arm as the sole stay against all *evil*, we may surely (with the assent of all) take two lessons to ourselves—1, the enormous amount of responsibility that rests upon every single man for his opinions; and 2, the enormous amount of judgment which is recorded against any of us for one immoral enjoyment. Of opinions true or false, of acts moral or immoral, we shall give account. That is the quiet teaching of Trinity Sunday; that is the trumpet voice from burning Paris; and while it but increases the overwhelming nature of this thought, that for each of us as individuals every slightest extenuating circumstance if we go wrong will be taken into account by a perfect Judge, it but brings out the more clearly, the more free from all disguise or admixture, the responsibility itself which remains.

1. As to our responsibility for our opinions—and consider first established opinions—what can to our mind exceed the responsibility in this age of the Roman Church as regards the religious heart of France? A vast alienation of human intellect has unquestionably been produced by the promulgation of two doctrines, in which it may be clearly seen that the exigencies of the worldly situation have been yielded to. The old polytheistic tendencies of the vulgar, never fairly met by that Church in former ages, have encroached more and more, and Mariolatry has pushed the object of its devotion within the circle of Divine Attributes. So have Scripture and Philosophy been surrendered to the voices of the multitude. Within sixteen years the fallen power of the Papal seat clutched at a higher standing still; separated from among the Powers of Earth, it has claimed to be one of the Powers of Heaven, and another Divine

Attribute has been arrogated to a living human creature. See, then, the responsibility we have as to established opinions. Ever we must be looking back to that which was from the beginning; never may we let the policy of the children of this world intrude into the sacred regions of truth.

And here, as to responsibility with regard to *unestablished* opinion—ever raising, ever growing knowledge. Here it is the leap to far off unjustified conclusions which has undone so far the fabric of society. The ascertainment of one or two more laws of sequence, taken to disprove final causes; the alliance of spirit and body always visibly so intimate on being shown still to be there in places where we looked not for it, taken to demonstrate man to be a mechanical engine. Proclamation therefrom made that “the strongest motive must prevail over the will,” without an effort to ascertain whether one motive is intrinsically stronger or better than another, justice than lust, truth than success,—and so man handed over to his own will.

But still, take all the mischief together which hasty conclusions in the way of philosophy may have wrought by being accepted, and even acted on by real thinkers, this does not amount to the hundredth part of the mischief which has been done in the common groups and everyday associations of society, by those who from such bold statements as have been made by philosophers (right or wrong but plainly bold), have taken the courage, or rather the audacity, to make others wonder by simply declaring that they believed just the opposite of every truism that could be stated. It is an easy process, but it is freely indulged in. You have but to take your truism and reverse it, denying what it asserts, or affirming what it excludes, and you have in your mouth a sentence which naturally surprises you and others by its novelty. You can thus make up for want of thought by strength of expression, and if it be slightly varied, it may easily seem to be almost painful in the reach of thought which it implies to those who have not the key.

But surely no responsibility can be greater than that which attaches to our statements of belief, or not-beliefs, if we are responsible for use of our own time, for use of our own money, for our kindly behaviour to our friends, relations, and dependants—surely the words that are to set men thinking, surely the observations that we utter as drawn from our own experience of life—surely the advice, not directly stated, but really contained in descriptions of our own practice—surely these things ought to be more valuable than coin, and we must not utter false coin: surely they are more important than looks or words of politeness, and we ought to be more careful how we apply them: surely they are more valuable than our own time, for they will much affect the time of others, and they may affect their eternity.

It is not noble watchwords written over inconsistent words and deeds that can make society sound. It is but the love of Truth and the pursuit of Goodness that can do this, and they are due to the working in us (secret or open) of the Grace of God.

What watchwords more noble than the names of Freedom, of Equality, of Brotherhood? and they stare at us over heaps of slain, the work of slaves and of tyrants. True opinions, good opinions, do not develop their mission by fire and shell and ever-spreading devastation. We have looked on long enough now, I think, in doubt as to whether *that* history has been some baptism of blood needed to prepare the advent of some golden age, whether it is a purifying of the earth or a vengeance. Surely the dream is over; a golden age to be reached in this direction is further off than ever; the vision is sinking down in blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke. They have sought law in every other field, but civilisation advances by law also; we must construct a future upon a founded past, not on a pile of ruin. By their fruits ye shall know them. It is not thus that the grace of God implored would work.

But we pass to a point more obvious, and yet one about which there is in some minds equal self-deception.

Enjoyments, we must remember, may be either within



or without the ring of those things which are included in the word Adversity, for some are adverse to our highest good. I believe the very best and highest and most intense enjoyments are all within the list of good things. But of course a vast amount of evil things is made up into the shape of enjoyment by depraved appetites.

Each of us carries about with him a monitor which, till we have depraved it, gives a clear title to each enjoyment proposed to it. "Bad in itself" is not a label that can be altered by just adding, "not very bad," "allowable in small measure," or "to be given up by and by."

Some deceive themselves by thinking "There lies the material for pleasure; if I do not take it others will. I am not to be blamed as if I created, or, by a great effort, brought close to me things or persons to minister to my desires. I am surrounded by it. My single act will not make the least difference. It will go on all the same if I abstain."

Let me take a more homely simile. If you say thus, you are like a person who should expect a luggage train, which is appointed to start at a certain time, laden with a vast amount of merchandise, to carry his small parcel without payment. The train is fixed to go. It stops at the station I want my parcel to go to. It is but dropping it with the other things. My servant will fetch it; it is nothing to carry; and it might as well be carried for me, without charge. Not more ridiculous than that is the plea for sin which we sometimes hear. The train is started simply to carry luggage; it is built, provided, arranged to carry it for those who pay; it will carry none without.

And be the train of evil in this world ever so vast, ever so undeniable, ever so certain to go to and fro and stop at its appointed place, you, if your contribution to its load be ever so small, you must pay for it. And because there is no sin that disappears because you can see it no longer, therefore you cannot wholly pay for it in this world. Sin is a thing of an eternal nature. It is not a mere offspring of time. Your immortal spirit gives birth to it, and it is

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beyond the power of things material to answer for it. You, in your small measure, swell the weight of this world's iniquity. It will not be unknown.

Pray then that you may not be blind to the world's great truths. Pray God that you may know the facts of His being and of your own. So shall you be both intelligent and valorous, and free from the Eternal Adversity.

## SERMON X.

### BELIEF IN THE TRINITY A BREATH OF LIFE.

EPH. iii. 9.

*“ To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”*

THUS St. Paul describes the Commission which was given him from God, in words that must ever be an irremovable stumblingblock to any serious or thoughtful unbeliever. It is a thing impossible to doubt that St. Paul was absolutely and altogether sincere in life and word, if we have any power to frame for ourselves general laws by observation of man's life and conduct. And if he was sincere, if he was as able, as clear-sighted, as intellectual a man as his words and works testify, how came he to be possessed with such an idea as that God had communicated to him and to others something new and vital (which history shows us that the time was ripe to receive), and to devote a sober laborious life, without remission, and without disappointment, to telling men what this thing was? How is it that so calm, so wide, so philosophical a mind could be possessed with such a belief in matters of fact to which he was always ready to bear witness, if they were not true? Or supposing them to have been inventions, how was it that such false witnesses should “inoculate all ages with the most sacred love of truth”?

Were every other witness, every other statement, removed from our knowledge as to the Gospel Revelation, St. Paul would stand alone a problem and a phenomenon

which cannot be faced or explained, except on one hypothesis—viz., that the things which he said he knew were true. This admitted, we can well understand why he lived as he did, and why he died. For mankind were to be the richer, and the glory of God more visible for every word which he could crowd into his laborious days. We can understand why the mysteries which he opened up to us have formed part of the world's thoughts, of the world's government, of the world's whole life ever since.

Up to a certain point thought and feeling had done their work in lifting man; but wherever you looked abroad, upon Greece, upon Rome, upon God's own ancient people, there you saw that love of truth, and purity and justice, were beginning to wane in the heart of poor human nature for lack of something to uphold, feed, reassure, reinvigorate them.

It was with no doubtful voice that prophet, historian, philosopher, recognised that decay was begun, that thought had begun to stagnate, and society to corrupt: yet they did not decay, the world did not break up,—and why? Because He of whom St. Paul spoke, The great hidden Wisdom newly added to the world, proved to be the salt of the earth, and saved it from dying—took old decrepit societies and regenerated them—took new barbarian races and moulded them upon a nobler pattern.

Such was the history of St. Paul's doctrine up to this hour, and its work is not yet done. Anywhere to hinder it is to turn society back upon weak and beggarly elements; anywhere to promote it is to kindle light and fire and set nations and men forward on a new and vigorous course.

And now I would fain illustrate that which I have to say by asking you to direct your thoughts to two of those sacred pictures with which the tenderness of friends for old Memories of departed Schoolfellows, and the generosity of one of your own Dormitories, has so beautifully begun to adorn the house in which we worship.

The former of these pictures represents the first contact of Him Whom St. Paul preached with the wisdom of his own times. When little more than a child His human

intellect, growing and expanding, took pleasure in presenting itself with modesty before the wise and learned of his own nation—the leaders and the thinkers and the legislators,—and asking them questions, and being asked by them in return questions to prove whether He understood what He talked of, and His intelligence and His observations surprised them. The last of the pictures represents a great event in the summing up of the Church's Doctrine, of which I shall have to speak presently ; and the mention of it is not only appropriate to this day, but also to him of whom this whole house is a Memory. "When the war was over," said our Great Duke, "and I came home, I thought one of the first duties was to know *why*, on what rational grounds, I belonged to the Church of England, and I read through several books : the one which I value almost most of all is Waterland's *Treatise of the Athanasian Creed*." It was a saying worthy of his honesty and purity of purpose, and I think therefore we do well to have the Great Council among our pictures of Scripture and Church History.

How different is the earnestness and energy with which different minds give themselves to seize on opportunities ! One will take a journey to gain ideas from something under the shadow of which another lives without lifting up his eyes to it. One will know how to extract from what he has to read as it were every drop of its mental honey ; another will again and again peruse it and the ideas he gains will slip from his feeble fingers. One will penetrate the forbidding outside and find the treasure bright and pleasant within ; another will live, as it were, among heroes and kings in disguise,—the great writers whom he reads without appreciation, or allows to be speechless to him—and when he comes to know in after years the difference between what they have been to him and what they might have been, he will vex himself almost to death to think he could have been so senseless and so unperceiving.

Wise and beautiful is the exhortation to us all to try to be Christlike in our lives. The first point it would seem

of this Christ-likeness is to be obedient to parents, and the second point is to make the most of our intelligence at the earliest possible moment. For observe, the Evangelist is almost solicitous to imply to us that it was not the presence of Deity which so enabled Him to speak or act, it was the growth of the pure human soul and mind that is recorded in words which may be applied to any son of man—who lives like a true son of man. “His understanding and His answers” were the fruit of His attentive spirit; and He “increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.” •

Such was the Opening of the Mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God Who created all things by Jesus Christ—the record of an earnest, beautiful Boyhood.

But after a while the glorious human soul, with its acute observation of men, of principles, of history, its accumulated store of Scripture, its penetrating insight into the depths which lay even in very simple passages of it, its ready, apt, and vigorous application of it to things around Him,—this glorious soul was seen after a while to be not alone. There were clouds and darkness about some of the things He said. He spoke of what He Himself would do in judging the living and the dead. He spoke of the value to the human race not merely of the truths He taught, but of the bodily life He lived,—of the blood within His veins, of the humanity He appeared in—for He began to show that it *was* an appearance in humanity, not a mere elevation of humanity,—that His was a sacrificial life, His a propitiatory death, that death would have no power to hold Him, nor earth itself to detain Him.

Men had early seen that He was not alone: He had early said that it was the Father Who was with Him: but “point by point He revealed to men the fulness of His face,” and therein they saw the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—point by point they concluded, they were sure, they went over and over again the evidence of works and words,—and voices and signs and inspirations and intuitions and conversions

and spiritual conquests and graces given made men to see the mystery which had been hidden since the world began, that God had made Himself for their sakes Man, and borne His part in the world which He had called into being. As He had made His creatures free, so free He left them, but He left them without excuse for preferring sin to perfectness.

But ere His work was done He had spoken words and given promises of another Eternal and Almighty Spirit to descend and dwell with men; to fill for all the place which He once had filled with His own friends and companions—a Guide, a Comforter, a Strengtheners. That this Spirit in companionship with men's spirits was God 'was taught them by the things He wrought, by the manifestations He made of Himself, by the grief, by the indignation, by the love, by the intercession which he was shown to feel or to use. And so came out another light of the hidden mystery, when men began to know and prove the presence and the active work and inspiring love of One Who was not the Father nor the Incarnate Son.

And all this truth was a vision of heavenly joy. Men loved it, they lived in it, they spent themselves in spreading the knowledge of it, they died for it, and triumphed.

We know well the bound which the human mind and the human spirit then made. We see thought refreshed, philosophy rekindled; a new speech is on men's lips. And, what is far more than all that, a new spirit is in men's lives. There were truths which were hid from none, too difficult for none, too easy for none. A great bond of brotherhood ran through the world from throne to cottage. A great institution arose which recognised no difference between man and man. It was no more the theory of governors that mythology and temples were useful things to keep men tranquil. Governors and subjects had one truth before them, and bowed the knee to One God—One Father Who was the Fountain of all being, One Son Who redeemed the creation from self-chosen evil, One Spirit Who dwelt in and sanctified every rational spirit, and was the life of all that lived.

And here arose the inevitable question—inevitable everywhere, but above all amid the subtle, wise, and penetrating Greeks:—Are the Three Whom we worship, are they three forms of One? Is it one God Who in three different ways has revealed Himself? Or are there three Gods in the Universe? Or is there a great mystery in the nature of God? And even as we ourselves are in body and soul a mystery to ourselves, *so* is God's nature in its infinity something insuperable by our finite thought? So that, as we may most simply express it, we know that there are Three Persons, for they have severally revealed themselves, and each has borne and bears his own part in man's salvation, and in regions of thought and existence to us unknown—and yet we know that there is but One God? And in a mystery about God's nature might we well acquiesce?

Such were the solutions which offered themselves to men's minds when so great a question presented itself and demanded an answer. It was an awful moment, and if you turn back to history you will find how it was so felt to be. The Emperor on the throne of the world convened all the heads of the Institution to which men looked for an answer; and solemnly was the question answered. We may not think that God was revealed in three forms, or that the Invisible Father could suffer or die, or that the Spirit who was sent by Christ from the Father, was identical with the Father or with Christ.

We may not think there are three Gods. Yet if we accounted the Son to be of a different and inferior nature to the Father, that is the conclusion to which we should come. But we may with all humility, we may with all truth, declare that the nature of God is beyond our comprehension; that it is no difficulty to admit that, and to take from the revelation which God has given us the strong and strengthening truth which this day's festival is appointed to commemorate—that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are Three, yet One; One Giver and Three Workers of man's eternal life and holiness, Who have had pity on our weakness and on our sin and on our death, and speak to us



most lovingly, and visit us most constantly with the gifts of repentance and forgiveness and consolation and power.

Do not look on the teachings which this day brings with it as teachings of a doctrine too high for you. Too high for your understanding it is ; but what of that ? It is not too high for you to live by. The air you breathe, the light you see by, the sound you hear by, are all too difficult to understand. We know not the nature, the reality, the essence of any one of them ; but we live, we see, we hear by means of these uncomprehended mysteries. And the life of your soul is a higher mystery still ; but a sweeter mystery, a dearer mystery, a mystery which we can cherish in our heart of hearts, for it assures us that the Author of all loved the world ; that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him should not perish either through ignorance or sin, but should have everlasting life ; that He hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and that it is in the power of that Spirit that we speak when we are able to call Him "our Father." If it would be beyond all things fearful to us to lose that Name, to find we had no right so to address Him, then let us more and more live with the feelings of sons, the dutifulness of sons—yes, with the unforgetful pride which sons have in a noble father even on earth.

For God has not given us such names in vain ; and when He calls us His children, it is a child's privileges and a child's rights He gives, as well as a child's duties.

## SERMON XI.

### THANKING THE FATHER.

COL. i. 12.

*"Giving thanks unto the Father."*

AMONG all the noble energies which enriched the heart as well as the mind of St. Paul, none is more pervading and none more quiet and unobserved than the active thankfulness and gratitude and thanksgiving into which his words of counsel, of instruction, even of sorrow, break out. When once we have noticed it, it seems to us as if an element of thankfulness inclosed like an atmosphere all else that he thought or felt.

Even indignation, much more regret, much more encouragement, seem all to be floating, as it were, within a thankful air. Other things he feels intensely, but there is a limit to them ; they reach a certain distance, and are always within recall ; they pour down upon certain evils, they bathe certain weaknesses ; but beyond all, embracing all, limitless until it breaks in joyful waves round the foot of the throne of God, there is the ever-rolling sea of his thankfulness.

Take St. Paul's letters and turn them over, glancing at the first few lines of each, and then, wide and numerous as you know their topics to be, though some are to churches which had allowed things highly blameworthy in themselves, and some to churches which had been evidently far from rising to a full sense of their responsibilities and their own capabilities, yet almost every one, before it comes

to the subject-matter of the occasion, breaks out in its thanksgiving hymn.

To the Christians of Rome he begins, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all ;" to the men of Corinth, "I thank my God always on your behalf ;" of Ephesus, "I cease not to give thanks for you ;" of Philippi, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." To the Church of Colossæ, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." The first time he writes to the Thessalonians, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers ;" and the second time, "We are bound to thank God always for you as it is meet." And who cannot recall the burst of thankfulness to his best-loved and most affectionate son in the faith, when he even thanks God for leading him to pray so constantly for him ? "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers day and night."

The truth is, and it is very subtly implied in this last passage of St. Paul, that there is scarcely anything to be more thankful for than the possession, or the attainment, of a thankful spirit. It cannot, I suppose, be very common in the world ; one hears so much of ingratitude, of benefits forgotten, of long kindness repaid with coldness and conceit, that the ordinary commonplaces of such talk are a sufficient evidence that a thankful spirit is not a very usual possession among worldly people. But when it *is* possessed there is real happiness. Then nothing happens so small in the way of comfort, or pleasure, but that it kindles up this thankful feeling, which is the very key and talisman of happiness : it makes your own happiness run over and be shared by others ; and above all it is a witness to your own heart that God Himself rejoices in your being happy, and as happiness is to you a means of making you better because it makes you turn and draw closer to the Giver of happiness, so He who with each one of us studies nothing so much as to make us better and to make us draw nigh to Him, is sure to draw the thankful in this way, giving them

ever fresh occasions for thankfulness, ever fresh happiness, that they may come nearer and nearer to Him ; just as those who will only go to Him in sorrow, who forget Him in joy, and only return when they are in trouble, will assuredly find trouble upon trouble, sorrow upon sorrow, coming to them,—because God has no other end for any one of us than this, that whether through joy or whether through grief, we may at last be His, and He will give us in His providence just those endless complications and chains and combinations of event and circumstance which best suit our character.

We must notice, besides, that however common ingratitude is, it is not so common as gratitude, when it exists, is strong. I believe it to be entirely any man's own fault who at the end of his life can say he has found an ungrateful world. However many instances of ingratitude he may have known, yet the strength and power and intensity of the instances of gratitude which he *has* received will, if he has deserved them, have made up, have so far more than made up, and paid with such overflowing measure any sense he may have of gratitude deserved, that he never can call it an ungrateful world. This is the experience of the contemplative poet, who says—

“ I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
 With coldness still returning :  
 Alas ! the *gratitude* of men  
 Hath oftener left *me* mourning ; ”

*mourning*, that is, that I should have done so very, very little, and received so very much of kindness in return.

But let us take the few words of our text more closely. We feel at once the exceeding appropriateness of the word “Father” in this case. “Giving thanks to the Father.” The permanent sense of thankfulness to a father is different from that which we can feel to another person—and any approach to that we describe, by the strongest term we can use, by calling it “fatherly kindness.” Any one who has experienced that in his youth, who knows the evils from which it has kept him, the confidence with which he could

confess sins to him, the assurance that nothing which concerned him would be uninteresting to the father, or the fatherly friend; who knows how he has turned back in thankfulness for unlooked-for, unexpected gifts, provisions, arrangements, to find that his father had never once imagined that he was doing anything but what came quite naturally to do; such a one knows what is meant by "giving thanks to the Father."

And any son (and here there are many such) to whom his own father is but a name, a portrait, or a dimly-remembered form and face, and who has known the blessing of having been led to endeavour in some measure to sustain the weakness, to comfort the drooping spirit, to uphold the hopelessness, or at least to fill the aching void, which but for that father's removal would never have known what weakness or hopeless languor meant,—he from his very sense of loss, he from the very difficulty he has felt in trying to fill a place which another would have filled without effort, never can be without the sense of what is meant by "giving thanks to the Father."

It is told of a saint—for such all who knew Thomas Erskine called him—who has not long passed away in very old age, a layman whose name hereafter will be mentioned with the names of Robert Nelson, or Robert Boyle, or Alexander Knox—that walking many years ago over a northern moor with a friend, he met a shepherd whom he greeted, and then added the words, in a very quiet voice, "Do you know The Father?" There was no time for more; but years after the same pair of friends made the same expedition, and on the same pastures the shepherd, now grown an old man, came up and grasped the arm of him whose earlier words had roused him from his poor, low-thoughted cares, into the sense that he was an object of love and care in heaven, and he said, "I know the Father now." <sup>1</sup>

Beloved, "do you know the Father?" If you do, no one can tell you anything about thankfulness to God which you do not feel already as a common feeling. If you do,

\* <sup>1</sup> Dean Stanley's *Church of Scotland*.

you are already in some measure entering into the joyfulness of St. Paul's life amid trouble, persecution, poverty, and suffering; for certainly, like him, you do not spend days without "giving thanks to the Father."

For then you have the same reason to give thanks as he had. He says he thanks Him "Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." That is, in three words, you have to thank Him for Union, for Hope, for Light. How can you help but thank Him for Light which enables you to know Him and this world and all persons in it as His; for hope that the light in which you have seen Him may increase, and enable you to estimate duties and sins, trials and advances, gifts and aids, more and more truly, and save you from the deceptions and evils in which many go astray and fill their own lives with darkness? And above all you are thankful to Him for that union with Himself which enables you to call Him with real meaning your Father. And here, alas! what Christian spirit can think of this subject without sorrowing to think how plainly the spirit of thankfulness, how plainly our confidence in our union with the Father and with each other, has suffered an obscuration in the Church itself? What plainer instance can we have of it than in the very name which old times gave to the Communion of the Lord's Supper? They called it the Eucharist, or the Thanksgiving; and I suppose that no one ever hears and understands that name nowadays for the first time, without feeling somewhat perplexed to know why Holy Communion should have for its distinguishing name this name of "Thanksgiving." Some, I doubt not, would say to themselves, "We have thanksgiving in our services, we give thanks in our private prayers when the day is ended, or when we have received some great blessing,—but to the Holy Communion I draw near with a sense of deep awe, carefully preparing myself to receive it, thankful, no doubt, and giving thanks for the blessing I there expect to receive; but to be made partaker of the Body and Blood of Christ revives in my mind the deep sense of the sin which made Him die; it revives in my mind the thought of my Lord's sorrow and

suffering; it is very good for me to be reminded thus of them, and better still for me that I should receive from without into my inner soul the blessed, indescribable gift of God to strengthen me for the work I have to do in life,—but to describe that solemn service especially as a Thanksgiving would not naturally have occurred to me.”

It is just in this point that we feel the Christian Church has something to regain. That solemn service ought to be to her exactly what every one *would* specially describe as the Thanksgiving of Thanksgivings, in which it was most natural and most joyful always to unite with confidence. Until that feeling returns—and we trust it is returning—the Church may have gained much in other ways, but in this there is a loss still to be made up. Once no one thought of withdrawing but those persons who were not permitted to remain: still under instruction, still doubtful and sceptical and wavering, or carried away by some physical or philosophical dream called a heresy, or who for their open sins were under some sentence of exclusion. But about the fifth century probably, the time when so many clouds began to roll in over the Church, and so many mists to stifle its free breath, this among many sorrows was one of the worst that overtook her—the mixture of indifference and superstition, which separated the ideas of its being meet, right, and every Christian’s “bounden duty at all times and in all places to give thanks to the Lord, the Holy Father,” and specially and above all *then*, with angels and archangels to laud and magnify His glorious Name.

For now indeed we come to the second reason why St. Paul uses the name of Father in this place—viz. that we must, as sons, give thanks unto Him through and in the Only-begotten Son, through Him Who is God and Man, through Him Who is the Saviour of man, through Him Who is the Eternal Intercessor for man. For He alone has, by His sinless humanity, the right to present all human praise and thanksgiving; taking away its stains, and supplying its defects, and making it by His precious death and His own everlasting deserts, a glorious incense

to the Unseen, the Invisible, the Omnipresent, Who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.

And, beloved, we would that in this House of Thanksgiving it had been possible this day to unite in that perfect sacrifice of Thanksgiving so many who are to this house the ground and foundation of its thanksgiving.

How can we part without giving thanks indeed to Him who has blessed this so young school with such numbers of useful, active, energetic men, her sons, who almost in every department of life, and in every quarter of the world, are doing earnest and good service, here conspicuous, there for the present quiet and retired, yet no less valued by the Lord of all our service; there, again, in every one's judgment bright of promise, and certain one day to bear rich fruit if it be blessed by the Lord of the vineyard.

And can we part after such a meeting<sup>1</sup> without thanking God from our hearts that these and such as these truly feel, even if time and distance keep them away, that their influence at school is not over; that it never can be over so long as it is possible for them to revisit the scenes of early work and early play, still thronged by those who talk of them, still affected—yes, still formed—by the traditions which they have left behind them. They know that it is possible still to repair, still to improve, still to enforce that powerful tradition, and they care to do it.

Therefore may we without shame, without fear, still in hope, still with confidence, look further down the page of St. Paul's Epistles, and continue that glance, of which I spoke at first, for a few lines more, and observe not only St. Paul's thankful spirit, but mark with joy that thing for which he gives thanks in letter after letter, and specially that most joyful and perfect one of all—

"I am bound to thank God always for *you*, as it is meet, brethren, that your faith groweth exceedingly, and that the love of you all toward each other aboundeth."

<sup>1</sup> Old Wellingtonian Match, 1872



## SERMON XII.

### THE TREASURE OF TREASURES.

HEB. xi. 26.

*"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."*

THE Apostle says that when the powerful Hebrew chose to throw in his lot with despised rights and a trampled people, rather than cling to the honour and the wisdom in which he had been trained as a prince and educated as a scholar, he was preferring to the treasures of Egypt the reproach which attaches to Christ's cause. The cause of the oppressed and believing people, the Apostle and we looking back now know to have been Christ's cause; and perhaps already something of a divine dawn lit his hope with the belief that it was not only for God and for man that he was choosing, but even for God-in-Man seen dim and distant. There is not however in this passage, nor in Scripture anywhere, any touch of disdain for those abandoned treasures, as though they were not worth considering. Nor yet is it implied that Christ's cause is all reproach, as if those who embraced it had for a time no satisfaction but in the thought that some day all would be reversed, and themselves made happy, when the present happiness of others should be turned to misery. Moses in Egypt had learning, had love, had influence: had these in the eye and centre of a gentle, civilised, law-loving, art-loving, polished, reverent nation. These are not things which Scripture scorns. Scripture has had more to do

with teaching them in their very essence than any other power of the world has; and Scripture does not make depression or fanaticism to be the characteristic of the saints—but above all things sound sense and high spirit.

The tone of the passage, if we would really understand it, is this—that, grand or precious to him as Egypt's treasures were, he valued more than these that cause which proved afterwards to be the cause of Christ, even though, at the time, it was undervalued by all his friends, and involved him in reproach, in bitterest criticism, and personal humiliation, and for a time brought him and could bring him nothing else. And it says that the inward light which enabled him to see that his choice was wise and right, was the power of faith.

We must remember that what he forsook was all restored to his nation; the learning, the art, the wealth sprang up again in Israel: what he left behind in Memphis arose in Jerusalem: arose pure of idolatry and steeped in prophecy. What he did was the act of one who would not sell his birthright: would not surrender a more glorious distant inheritance for a present fee: would not give up the key which he held in trust of a royal treasure-house, for immediate estates: would not exchange for the lamp of gold the poor clay lamp which was the token of powers unseen.

And if the mantle of Moses fall over our spirit, it will not make us undervalue the things which surround us, but rather prize them high and be eager to learn their uses. It will make us most fearful of misusing or corrupting them. It will teach us all the more how to use them *in* Christ, while it teaches how we might be able to dispense with them *for* Christ. Few are they who are actually asked to come out of the world and forsake all, like the St. James whom we have just commemorated,—though no man can say such call to utter self-renunciation will ever sound in his ears. But for most of us our bidding is to remain in the world, and there use Christianly and purely the treasures given to us in it.

We seem, then, to have no less than three things here to think about and do since I suppose no one is unaware that

he has gifts from God which may most justly be called Treasures for him. And of the three, the first is the wise *comparison* of our several treasures, worldly with spiritual, earthly with lasting. The second is the *recognition* of them *all as* treasures. The third is the *hallowing* of our treasures—the *consecration* of them to highest ends. Of the first we have already spoken. We know that now in Christendom we, O sons of Christ, have temptations to forget our Master nearly as trying as the ancient idolatries, more subtle indeed, not so palpable: nay, in our very education, in our broadest duty, in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, few can doubt that in the highest literary cultivation the perfection of criticism, unbalanced by constructive studies, may become the dissolution of that very belief which it is its highest office to build up and from time to time interpret to the needs of the age; while even in the humbler, earlier closed, less ambitious and more utilitarian modes of education, there is from boyhood a necessary surrender of the ideal and the speculative, which may tend to induce indifference towards unseen realities, apathy, in things spiritual.

The way, the only way to be safe from both dangers, is the way in which we are saved from all dangers and from sin itself. It is that we should value to the utmost all our treasures, but that above them all we should exalt the Reproach of Christ. This alone can *teach* us that self-sacrifice which is the sole instrument of eternal work: this alone is the warrant that our treasures will not be taken away, while it is the key of the eternal kingdom in reserve.

One mode of training, one set of associations, may tend to throw us into that mood of mind whose readiest questioning on every conceivable topic is, "I wonder how much of this is true?" without leaving us the least desire to ascertain how much, or to build up and to live by what *is* true. Another training may leave us without one spiritual questioning, in unruffled acquiescence in the world as it is, mere investigators of phenomena; but if we will earnestly and always keep Faith alive by honest study of the Word,

and foster Love by referring our plans, our hopes, our fears, our pleasures, in prayer to God in Christ; no such barren lot will be ever ours. He will take nothing from us: He will add all things to us.

The God of Knowledge, the Spirit of History, the Soul of Nature, will have us know and read and think and experiment; only He would not have us live unblessed by Him; as slaves in hiding, or as sons in estrangement.

Furnish yourselves, instruct yourselves, He said on earth, with learning unto the Kingdom of Heaven: have in your treasure, and bring forth out of your treasure, things new and old. "How readest thou?" was His question to the questioner. From childhood His understanding, His answers, were wonderful. His last bitter censure on the students of His day was, "They have taken away the key of knowledge."

To some extent we have already seen what our present Treasures partly are. The Method of Study was the first, but we must remember that we have many more; that few of England's sons have more than you.

Let me mention one or two more of them. I mention in the second place the treasure of Tradition. I remember as if it were but yesterday—though there is not one here who can remember it with me—how in the first year of the life of the College, before this solid, beautiful house in which we are now existed except as a bright dream—when still we used to worship in a large "upper room, furnished and prepared," there came to us for the first time that great Pastor, who has passed from life to Life in a moment, and left all England mourning for "the comfort, the delight, the assistance" which his genius can renew for her no more. To our assistance, delight, and comfort, he came that early day, and as the spell of his presence and of his speech fell upon all, what was the subject with which he filled our ears and hearts? It was, Tradition. The founding of a good Tradition—Tradition, Tradition—how he made the word ring! "However various the powers," he said, "however dissimilar the characters, though many might be ignorant, and some might have but a short time

to stay here, of the first generation of the College—all, all had one work to do in a remarkable degree; *Tradition* they had to found for others to transmit and modify, debase or exalt, perhaps, but never to found again." And he spoke of one spirit in particular against whom the Tradition was to make war. His brow gathered blackness and his eye fire, as he looked into the air, as though he could almost tear from it him whom he called "the hovering Demon of Impurity."

If that tradition of war with evil *was* founded; if any who have ever let themselves be tempted of evil, have to remember that therein they were traitors to Tradition, that even if they could find any obscure countenance for their wishes, yet the main river and current of Tradition was against them; and if they have then begun to see that traitorhood to the tradition of one of England's great Boy-homes is both disloyal and positively against boyhood's own first principles; if in any other thing you learnt when you came here, or have realised in your life here, that this and that evil, or baseness, or meanness, or audacity, or unkindness was "a thing not to go on here,"—then what a treasure is Tradition. How you will uphold what in it is high, strengthen what in it is weak: know that no contribution which you can make to the brightness or beauty or honours of your school can compare to what you may do for its Tradition.

The third treasure I will name is the treasure of Opportunity. Over and above the opportunities which would belong to each anywhere from his individual character and circumstance,—those opportunities of daily life in which the earnest spirit, ever, whether seriously or sportively, ever without self-consciousness, gleams with hints of goodness and touches of strength, fruitful and helpful to ourselves perhaps years after—those opportunities which, alas! we are too apt to sacrifice to a fit of idleness or ill-temper,—there is for you that greatest Opportunity of all, created for all, and shared by all, arising out of your juxtaposition, through your being called from your homes and associated in your school. You have seen the chemist pour together

colourless fluids, you have seen the tints come out, you have seen them become opaque, or congeal into a solid mass. So characters, clear, transparent, colourless, change their appearance and their properties and their influences when blended together. "You may do *so* much," said the same late-silenced voice to you, as boys of Wellington College, in words which you can still read for yourselves,<sup>1</sup> and which will become part of the literature of your century, "you may do *so* much in this daily fashioning of their enduring character. Never, perhaps in all your after lives, can more be done for others, by you, my sons in Christ, than can be done here and now within this College,"—a plain stating of a plain fact, which every heart of your elders will confirm to you. Your "contact so close;" the "wax so soft; the impress so readily received, so long retained," . . . "a crisis of lives" here "in which you may affect for good or evil those around you in a single hour more than you can do hereafter in a year. One look, one word, the example of one act, may produce effects which may last on to eternity."

Great, then, is the treasure of Opportunity, though so unlike the two first treasures. Study, a mine inexhaustible, ever enriching, ever tempting on the worker: Tradition, a precious currency stamped with the King's mark, never to be debased, never to be defaced: Opportunity, a treasure like the manna of Israel; you can have no more than your share; you cannot gather it but at the moment when the sun and the dew are bright and fresh upon it; you cannot accumulate it, yet it is the bread and life of the people. And the fourth treasure, again, is like itself only. It is a jewel-house; it is a reliquary; it is an ark which is to receive and preserve in undefiled honour the remembrances of the past. It is the treasure of Association. The words I have quoted lead me to it. Names which will never be commonplace in English history

<sup>1</sup> "Commemorations of the Departed. A Sermon preached at the Consecration of the Chapel at Wellington College, July 16, 1863. By Samuel, Lord Bishop of Oxford." Oxford and London: J. H. and J. Parker.

must never be commonplaces here. The Duke who saved Europe, whose watchword was Duty, every fragment of whose writing, as year after year it sees the light, only strengthens the might of his fearless example; the stainless Prince, who, through evil report and good report, was, as we know now, deeply influencing and exalting England amid endless self-sacrifice; and he who yielded to none in love and hope and labour for this place, the great Orator and Statesman, who in this chapel listened with frankest, warmest admiration to his sole peer for eloquence, the great Orator and Churchman. Listen to the exordium of that day. Thus it ran: "The peculiar character of this College is that it is a commemoration. Like all other colleges, it is for the living; unlike them, it is a remembrance of the dead. Like all others, it is full of the intense vitality of the young; unlike all others, it is itself a noble mausoleum. Like all others, its daily voice is 'Learn how to live;' but, unlike others, from it arises in every pause of that living hum, as the tolling of some funeral bell when the mighty pass away, the solemn utterance, *Memento mori*."

*Memento mori*. It is said the speaker had that strange unfeared impression which we sometimes hear of, that his parting with the earth and all that was to him so fair in it, would be short and sudden. *Memento mori*—pass ten years from the day of that sermon,—ten years, and on the third day from that, the slip of a sure-footed steed on a faultless road had already added the greatest of our prelates to our commemoration roll: the brightest genius, the most diligent energy, the very vivifier of his order. And to a Wellington, an Albert, a Derby, a Wilberforce, I might add other names famous in debate, in diplomacy, in colonial rule—an Ellenborough, a Clarendon, a Newcastle, who, with many not to be named at present, have spent time and thought and care upon your interests and your happiness. Are not such associations rich in power to bid you be like-minded: to rouse us all to self-sacrifice and devotion, to make us think it a duty to aim high, to seek fullest cultivation of our powers, "to scorn delights and live laborious days"? For so they lived one and all. And while the name of

many a Founder lives but in his College, our strain and effort is to found a College worthy of such names: that while progress like their own should be our aim, the wisdom of looking back as well as forward should be also ours.

Truly believed and sincerely acted on, their tradition and associations alone would justify the value we set on our public schools; and in parting from you I may undoubtingly say I believe this to be often very present to the minds of the elder and more thinking of you, present there to their own lasting good and to the blessing of the place; and so long as it is so, all is well. But were it otherwise, were it ever forgotten that the four earthly treasures, of Knowledge, of Tradition, of Opportunity, of Association, belong to public schools as they belong to no smaller gathering of teachers, to no less honourable or close association of boys—were it forgotten that carelessness on any side *may* turn recreation into an organised idleness, and substitute extravagance for discipline, and connivance for authority,—the best wish for public schools, with all their majestic outlines and clustering dependencies, would be that they might sink, as greater institutions have done before them, into grey and honourable ruin.

But not so will it be, never will it be, so long as it is known and felt in them that greater than all their other treasures is that to which the Lawgiver sacrificed every other—the Reproach of Christ;—so long as it is owned fearlessly that the visible Cross which sheds the earliest light through our windows, and the Spire-cross, which holds the last glow of evening, represent without falseness and memorialise without reproachfulness the Brow-Cross which has been traced on every forehead, and the Heart-Cross which has once been erected in every breast. For does not the Cross teach us these things—first, that the sorrow and the death which lie before us all can be not borne only but be triumphed over by the tenderest and the weakest? It teaches fearlessness. And that sensuality is unworthy and is hateful? It teaches self-command. And that the Love of Man is the highest passion, and the Love of



God the calmest strength, and that Self-sacrifice yields unbounded power first over men, and secondly in the sight of God?

How awful it would be to deny that Cross, who does not feel? Yet when I see for the first time in the whole world's history, whether Pagan or Christian, a division made at least in theory between educations religious and non-religious—as if religion could be a vertical section of the mind instead of a broad underlying stratum—I cannot but think it is possible that the day may return when you will be asked plainly, Do you confess Christ, or do you deny Him? But awful as we now deem that *one* answer would be, yet if the questioning is to be averted, or if we are to be strong to confess Him who will never deny us, most certain it is *that* averting and *that* confession belong not so much to the particular era to come as they do to this. I mean the stream of events is being turned, the answer to the question is being prepared *now*. What you are accustoming yourself to be now in daily life, that you will *be* then in the crisis. In God's sight it cannot be at all *more* awful to deny Christ with the lip, than it is to profess Him with the lip and deny Him in the heart and in the conduct.

But I refrain from seeking to move any one by pictures of that which may be: the thought of consequences has little effect on the thoughtless, because their thoughtlessness arms them with a vain belief in possibilities of evasion; and the thoughtful do not need the thought, but care more (as they ought to do) for the principle as it stands than for what may befall them; and I shrink from the least semblance of over-statement.

What is absolutely needed is that you should realise not so much that which will be, as that which is: that you should work into your own minds the true force, the meaning and the power, of your Baptism, your Confirmation, your Communion. All that has been rightly taught or learnt, all that has been well-lived here, has been, through whatever dimness, in whatever weakness, the fruit of God's Spirit striving with men and not giving up the contest, calling



them to Himself, changing their nature, strengthening, feeding them. The dimness and the hesitation and the divided heart of past years may He forgive. The seed that He has sown, the rain of grace which He has outpoured, the increase He has given, may He for ever prosper and cherish.

And now farewell. It has been given to me to watch for fifteen years God's wonderful work, and I thank and praise Him for all I have seen. You will pray for me too that the years may in no sense be lost to me : for I have seen a new growth in England, organic, spiritual, healthful, abiding. Its material nobleness is visible—pray that its invisible power be nobler far : great buildings and new homes have clustered here ; the bare brown plateau has verdured with the soothing beauty and the mighty promise of trees and flowers ; books—the strength, the grace, the wisdom, the holiness of humanity—giving us the communion of minds which answers to our yet higher communion of spirits—have streamed through my hands to the Library, valued by you each year more and more, and to be still more valued, I know, as the generations of the school grow on. The adornings of art have been liberally bestowed on us in our short life ; sacred arts picturing the great Acts and the great Sons of the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup> Who has moved dove-like from the beginning over first the chaos of man's life, and then over each province of expanding life as it arose out of the dark. Some are memories of our own brothers, some of our great Fathers in the Faith ;<sup>2</sup> all assert our undying union with the good, who sleep in the faith and hope of Christ.

Far above all material enrichment, I have seen the touching sight of youth and childhood gathering round us, partly conscious of ignorance, ready to learn, tremulously anxious to do right, to please the parents who surrendered them to us, or to honour a dead father's name ; I have seen, too,

<sup>1</sup> The Chapel dedicated to the Holy Ghost ; the windows representing in series Scriptural events ascribed to the Holy Spirit, and periods of Church History and Life.

<sup>2</sup> The Mosaics of the Apse.

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though more rarely, the more touching sight of ignorance, ignorant of its ignorance, of its weakness, and of its danger, fearing discipline and not being a law unto itself; they have been brought *not to us*. I have seen them "brought unto Jesus, and He has touched them." And how can I thank God for His works of grace, for the unfolding of high principle, and the expansion of strength and the kindling of Christian fire? for such a power there has been in our prefectual order—the Lord increase it evermore. And I speak with diffidence, and I speak with reverence, of the nearer counsel and goodness that has been by my side; no one has ever come to help me without some true touch of devotion to the high cause, some with an enthusiasm and a patience and a self-forgetting that leaves you and me for ever their debtors, and their reward is not here.

Thus for fifteen years I have laboured, often in most salutary trouble, yet with ever-increasing happiness. The trouble is gone like a shadow. The happiness cannot be taken away. I have seen you all come here; every one who labours or is laboured for has been welcomed here by me. I have seen near a thousand men go away to labour in their turn where and as duty summoned and God ordained. And now I go myself. I came to the newest educational and spiritual work in England, bidden to shape it. I go away to the most ancient. Here I have made rules for others; I go to strive to conform myself to rule. Here I have served the memory of him who snapped the yoke that was laid on modern Europe; I go now to serve memories that are green still, though they budded when Norman strove with Saxon, ere Saxon had done his strife with Briton. Nor can I now forbear one thought, for it is forced on me: if ever we are disposed to contrast bygone ages unfavourably with our own, we may ask ourselves whether we think the systems we have arranged, the wheels we have just seen begin to turn, will run as freely, will work as adaptably to the needs of seven hundred years to come, as the great institution of the past moves now when seven hundred years have passed over it, age after age ready to become young again? Yes, we may say—if ours too is built on humanity's

best, on a true perception of humanity's needs, on a devout humility and eager acceptance of God's work in man and through man. But not otherwise; not if we mistake troubled rills for fountains, and seek our immortality on earth, and hold doubt to be more wise and strong than faith.

If we build into the same building and trust the same corner-stone, we shall stand like them and share their strength; for life is one and indivisible, and so shall we be part of the Living Temple of God.

So shall your hearts beat strong with energy, yet be cool through self-restraint; and your work be wrought with diligence and rendered with cheerfulness; and your faces be bright with modesty, yet bold with frankness; and the grasp of your hands be firm and generous. For you will be men. You will seek Purity, that the souls and bodies you offer to those you love and to all-seeing God may be white and unspotted: Truth, that your speech may be simple and clear; Love, that your friendships may be sound, and that the brotherhood of men may be to you no shadow. But that these things may be, you must fix eye and heart unflinchingly on Christ and His Reproach; you must adore it, you must achieve it, for there is no treasure like the Reproach of Christ, understood and loved and lived.

THE END.



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